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8



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MARMADUKE HERBERT,

OR,

THE FATAL ERROR.

*Gardiner*

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

NEW YORK:  
BURGESS, STRINGER & CO.,

222 Broadway, corner of Ann Street.

1847.

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OR, THE

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### NOTICES OF THE PRESS.

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Perhaps no work has yet been written, of what are called novels, which more fully exhibits the potency of the romances, to do good, in a certain way than this! It cuts into the very heart—the sore, gangrened, suffering, guilty heart—of that immense social evil which has accumulated for long and artificial ages over the states of Europe; exposes the monstrous effect of the undue distribution of wealth, by unnatural means, which prevails in the monarchies there—and with the most daring boldness portrays facts, which, with all their repugnance to the delicate sense, and while the over-prudish may frown, are facts; and, being so, are as necessary to be exposed in strong light, as the putrifying flesh on which the surgeon is to perform a life-saving operation! We like this book well, and hope it will be read widely.—*Brooklyn Star.*

BURGESS, STRINGER & CO., PUBLISHERS.

222 Broadway, corner Ann street New York.

1842.6.9  
MARMADUKE HERBERT;

OR,

THE FATAL ERROR.

A NOVEL, FOUNDED ON FACT.

*Margaret (Power) Gardiner,*  
BY THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON

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New York :

BURGESS, STRINGER, & CO.,

222 Broadway, corner of Ann Street.

1847.

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# MARMADUKE HERBERT;

OR,

## THE FATAL ERROR.

### CHAPTER I.

WELL has it been observed, that truth is often stranger than fiction. The one fatal event that has destroyed my happiness, and cast its gloomy influence over a life that without it might have been peaceful, is an exemplification of this assertion. I do not seek relief by recapitulating the cause and results of my long years of misery, for well do I know the recurrence will add to, rather than diminish my chagrin; neither do I expect that my story can serve as a warning, for as the one event that led to my wretchedness was involuntary, neither example nor precept can be derived from its narration.—A motive urges me to lay bare the agonies that have long tortured my heart. I have a child, dearer to me than life itself, who, when I am laid in the grave, will peruse these pages, and comprehending much that, during my existence, was incomprehensible to her, will learn to feel for the misery of her father. Oh my child, my dear child! how often has my heart yearned to trust thee with the cause of those frequent fits of moodiness and abstraction which were uncontrollable, and which I feared must alienate thy affections (his sole blessing) from thy wretched parent. But even this dread, bitter as it was, was preferable to the risk of poisoning thy young life with a secret which might effect a baleful influence over it, so I have borne in silence suspicion and coldness, where I had been wont to meet only confidence and love. I have seen the wife of my bosom fade and die under the baleful influence exercised over her by my moodiness, yet I dared not reveal the truth to her; and I have marked the alienation of friends, produced by a conviction that madness had seized me, a conviction founded on my wayward humor, my despondency, my inexplicable changes from forced and unnatural gaiety to the deepest gloom. Oh! the misery of having a terrible secret, like a vulture preying on the vitals, yet not daring to pluck it out. To feel the dire necessity of everlastingly wearing a mask, of trying to force the jaded spirits when they refuse to own control, and of being aware that their sudden and violent changes will inevitably confirm suspicions that one would suffer death to remove.—Oh! the wretchedness of brooding over one terrible event,

"One fatal remembrance, one sorrow that throws  
Its bleak shape alike o'er our joys and our woes,"

through days, weeks, months, and years! To have sleep become as unbearable as waking, by being haunted with hideous dreams from which I awake to know that they are all based on one terrible truth.

But to my story.—My father, a man of ancient family, possessed of a small estate in Wales, was early left an orphan. The guardian to whom he was confided took care that he received a good education, but lived not to see its completion. Arrived at his majority, my father determined to travel, and after having explored France and Italy, visited Spain, where he became enamored of a youthful Spanish girl, with *sangre azula\** flowing through her veins, but with little worldly wealth. Beautiful, high-spirited, and impetuous, she resembled in her nature one of those fine Arabian coursers, so rare and so prized even in their own country. Acting ever upon the impulse of the moment, she waited not for reason to examine, or approve what it prompted, but so good, so noble were her feelings, that seldom did she err, and so passionate was her love for her husband, and so entire her devotion, that he sought not to correct a peculiarity, said to appertain to her nation, and which decidedly, in his eyes, lent her new charms. I was born in Spain, and drew my infant nurture from the breast of my mother. Her delicacy of structure, and nervous temperament, ill fitted her for fulfilling this maternal function, and anxiously did her doting husband desire that she should confide it to another. But she would not listen to his pleadings, and I imbibed with her milk much of the impetuous nature of my Andalusian parent, who, as she marked my precocious vivacity and impatience, would smile and say I was a true Spaniard. My father, too, was rather of a quick and fiery disposition, as most Cambrians are, and this similarity of temper, far from producing any disagreements, seemed to endear them still more to each other. My father died when I was little more than ten years old. His illness was short, and from the first baffled the skill of all the neighboring medi-

\* Blue blood, said to belong exclusively to the ancient noblesse of Spain.



cal men called in to his aid. Well do I remember the unceasing care, the almost breathless anxiety with which my poor mother hung over his couch, or flew to prepare, with her own hands, the remedies ordered by his physicians. But the fiat had gone forth—he expired in her arms, and for many days it was deemed that her life could not be saved. I followed as chief mourner to the grave. It seemed incomprehensible to me that the dear father, whom, only a few days before, I had seen in the bloom of health and manhood, walking on the very path along which his corse was now borne, my mother leaning fondly on his supporting arm, while holding by his hand, I moved by his side, his voice still ringing in my ears, should now be shut up in the black coffin, which I could not look at without a shudder, while the sky looked as blue, the trees and earth as green as before.

My mother's grief was at once deep and passionate. She *would* not be consoled. She could not be induced to leave the chamber, it was their nuptial one, in which my poor father died. There, giving way to the violence of her sorrow, she would pass all her hours, by turns weeping, and apostrophizing the dead. She shrank from the light of day, as if, to enjoy it when he could see it no more, were an infidelity to the departed. Nor would she suffer anything that had been his to be removed from the room. In vain did those around her preach resignation to the will of God. They spoke to ears that heeded them not. His death could not be viewed by her impatient mind in any other light than as a terrible, an irrecoverable blow, from the effects of which she did not desire to escape; nay, she accused her own heart of hardness and ingratitude, for not breaking when the heart of her husband had ceased to beat. She would detain me for whole days in her darkened chamber, by turns embracing me, and steeping my cheeks with her burning tears, until I involuntarily betrayed some symptom of uneasiness, inevitable to childhood under such circumstances, when she would banish me from her presence, saying, "I knew not how to grieve for such a loss as I had sustained; that if I did, she would not weep alone." Then she would summon me to her, embrace me fondly, acknowledge that she had been unreasonable in expecting that a child like me could feel grief as she did, and say, "That if she consented to live, it was for me alone." Her frantic sorrow, and passionate tenderness, alike alarmed me. I might, perhaps, have shared a gentler grief, have sympathized with a less vehement affliction, but the darkened chamber, and the half-frenzied mourner, became, after some weeks, objects of dread to me, the more intolerable from knowing I could not escape them. But let it not be supposed that I had ceased to regret, or remember my poor father. Never did a day, indeed I may say an hour, pass, that he was not thought of. I enjoyed no pleasure without recollecting that he never more could share it. I missed him from all his accustomed haunts, and, for many months, never saw the spire of the church where he was laid, glittering in the sunbeams, or tinged by the moonlight, without a tear starting to my eye; never inhaled the odor of *his favorite flowers*, nor heard the carol of the

birds which was wont to please him, without being melted into tenderness. My melancholy was of a mild and gentle character, which, if it burst not into violent paroxysms of grief, was not likely to pass away rapidly; while that of my poor mother resembled the sorrow of Joanna of Castile for Philip the Handsome, so engrossing and so uncontrollable were its effects.

A year wrought little change in her regret. It is true she would now venture forth, but it was to visit the vault where the remains of her husband reposed, and to saunter and weep over his favorite haunts. At this time, the guardian appointed by my father happening to make a tour through Wales, paid a visit to my mother. Mr. Trevyllan was a cold-hearted, selfish, matter-of-fact man, wholly destitute of sentiment, and totally incapable of comprehending it in others. He expected to find my mother reconciled to the loss she had sustained, or at least the bitterness of regret melted down to a gentle melancholy. He expected, too, to find at Llandover the creature comforts, to which no one attached more importance than he did; and was consequently both disappointed and vexed, when he discovered that the sorrow of his hostess rendered her alike incapable of companionship and of superintending her household affairs, as was proved, by her granting him only a brief interview, which was passed on her part in unchecked tears and lamentations, and by a repast of so frugal a character, that not even the keen appetite given by the air of the Welsh mountains could enable the epicure to tolerate it. He questioned the servants whether their mistress always pursued the same course as at present; and, being informed that since her husband's death she had wholly abandoned herself to sorrow, he formed the conclusion that her intellects must be deranged by grief; how else could her utter carelessness about her repasts be accounted for, by one who considered his daily fare as one of the most important affairs imaginable. Such an inconceivable neglect would at any time have satisfied him of the necessity of a verdict of insanity; but as the widow of his friend did not throw away her money, nor permit any extravagance in her expenditure, he felt it would be difficult to establish a case of mental derangement, on the mere grounds that she made no effort to check her grief, or pamper her appetite: so he contented himself with the determination of exerting his authority to have me placed at school with as little delay as possible, lest, as he thought, my poor mother should make me as mad as herself. He expected much opposition from her, in the adoption of this scheme, and was agreeably surprised when none was offered. Having repeatedly heard my father express his intention of sending me to a public school, and being determined religiously to fulfil every wish of his, she yielded to Mr. Trevyllan's proposal, and I accompanied him the following day, when he left. The parting with my mother greatly affected us both. The passionate love I had borne her before her grief had interposed a barrier between us, revived when I was leaving her; and my unexpressed regret seemed to awaken afresh her tenderness for me.

Now it was that, for the first time, I blamed

myself for not having evinced a deeper sympathy in her overwhelming grief during the last year. It might have lightened the burden of her sorrow; at all events, it must have soothed it to see that it was shared. If the tears that often fell from my eyes in secret, when thinking of my dear lost father, had been shed on her breast, they might have cooled its feverish sorrow, and I should not now have had to deplore that, checked by the sternness of her grief, I had not, as I ought to have done, partaken it. Pressed to her heart, its tumultuous throbbings seemed to communicate a magnetic influence to mine. I comprehended the extent of her sufferings, and would have given worlds to be permitted to stay with her another year, to prove that I was not cold nor forgetful, as I believe she had thought me. She, too, appeared now to understand my feelings, as our tears mingled together. She imprinted burning kisses on my brow, which was wet with her tears. She implored blessings on me—prayed that I might resemble my father—blamed herself for not having sooner comprehended me; and then, gently pushing me from her, said, "Go, while I have yet courage to let you leave me;" and, retreating into the little oratory inside her chamber, I heard her sobs, while sinking on her knees she prayed for strength to bear this new trial; and I left the home of my fathers, never more to behold my poor mother in life.

## CHAPTER II.

"WHAT's the use of crying, child?" demanded Mr. Trevyllan, when, having reached the first milestone on our journey, he found I still continued to weep. He could not have asked a question that I was more incapable of answering; and the brusquerie of the tone in which it was made, far from checking my regret, only increased it. "Come, come," said he, "you must learn to be a man, and get over this absurd habit of shedding tears. Tears are fit only for women, and they but show their weakness in indulging them."

This observation seemed to me to be nothing short of an insult offered to my poor mother, which I would gladly have resented, but my ignorance how to do so prevented the attempt, and, hurt and offended, I dried my eyes, and put my handkerchief in my pocket.

"You are a good boy," said Mr. Trevyllan, and he took my hand and shook it. "Never betray your feelings before strangers; they will only mock your distress, or envy you for any demonstrations of happiness. You will learn this as you grow older; but, in the meanwhile, it is my duty, as your guardian, to give you the benefit of my experience; whether you will profit by it, depends wholly on yourself. Be ever on your guard against the world. Conceal your errors from it, as you would from a relentless judge, whose condemnation you should tremble for; but remember it is almost as necessary to conceal, likewise, any weakness of your nature,

as to hide your faults. By weakness, I mean that foolish good nature, or kindness, to which some men are prone, and which renders them through life the dupes of the artful and designing, and objects of derision to men of sense. Learn betimes to resist every hasty impulse of compliance, either with the entreaties of others, or the dictates of your own heart, and you will find cause to rejoice at this self-control hereafter. A school is a faithful miniature picture of the world. In it you may acquire the art of governing yourself, and making use of those around you. 'The boy is father to the man,' and betrays the seeds of those vices or weaknesses which are to mark his career in manhood. Study the characters of your companions; and this study will enable you to judge men in general when you go forth into the busy world, where you will find it so difficult to steer clear of suffering by them."

I listened to this counsel with a distaste that increased my dislike to the giver of it. His peering and malicious eyes, looking out from under protruding and deeply-marked brows, the hard and stern expression of his mouth, and the harsh tones of his voice, produced an unconquerable sentiment of aversion in my heart. The advice, too, so different to the opinions of my dear parents, accorded so well with the countenance of Mr. Trevyllan, and the whole manner of the man was so repulsive, that I wondered how he could have been selected by my father to fill the trust confided to him. In the course of conversation he accounted for this, by explaining to me that he had never seen my father but once since they had parted at school, and then only for a few hours.

"Your poor father was one of those warm-hearted youths who plunge headlong into friendship with the first companion chance throws in their way," observed Mr. Trevyllan. "He loved me, or fancied he did, which amounts much to the same thing, and I preferred him to any of the other lads in the school. This same proneness to rush headlong into affection without weighing the prudence of the measure, or analysing the qualities of the object, led him to form a rash marriage, which he, however, in all his letters to me declared had secured his happiness. That was his affair, and not mine, so I never exposed to him, as some meddling fools would have done, how much wiser a choice he might have made in wedding a countrywoman of his own, with a good fortune and family connexions, that might have forwarded his interests in the world. The same want of perception and credulity which induced him to believe me endowed with all his own peculiar qualities, no doubt, led him to think that his wife was a paragon of perfection."

I drew up my head offended, and was about to pronounce an eulogium on my poor mother, when he cut me short, by adding—

"I don't want to say anything against either of your parents; I only have come to the conclusion, that as his friendship for me made your father give me credit for the possession of peculiarities the most opposite to my character, and congenial to his own, so may his mad passion for his wife have induced an equally false ap-

preciation of hers. One thing is quite certain, which is, that this extravagant passion of his for her renders his death an insupportable calamity to its object, to whom life is now an unbearable burden; whereas, had her husband been a cool, calculating, reasonable man, he would not have been blind to those manifold defects from which no woman is exempt; he would have endeavored to correct them, and, when he died, his widow would have found consolation by the reflection, that if she had lost a husband, she had likewise lost a Mentor, whose strictures, however just, were never palatable."

Such were the observations addressed by my guardian to me. It was plain he had not been used to children, or he would have selected topics more suited to my comprehension. How, at this time, I remember his words, surprises me, as much as it will doubtless astonish you, my dear child; but my memory was a peculiarly retentive one; and however distasteful the subject might be, I was flattered that he considered me old enough to be so confidential and communicative; I fancied myself more of a man, and, in consequence, assumed a more manly demeanor. I observed, that however Mr. Trevyllan prided himself on his habits of self-control with regard to his sentiments, he abandoned himself to the enjoyments of the table with the gusto of an epicure, and the gluttony of a *gourmand*.

In this particular, nothing could be so different from the habits of my father, who might be said to eat to live, and not to live to eat, so temperate was his appetite, and so frugal his repasts. He had taught me to partake sparingly of the simple fare set before me, and to satisfy my thirst with no other beverage than what was supplied by the cooling spring. Mr. Trevyllan remarked, and disapproved this system. A man, he said, should be able to live on the hardest fare, when compelled to it; but it was folly to adopt the habits of an anchorite, when opportunities offered for enjoying the pleasures of the table. He counselled, nay, insisted on my taking the food always the most luxurious the inns could afford, or set before us; made me drink wine, to which I had previously been a stranger; and, by the time we arrived at his residence in Serle-street, near Lincoln's Inn, neither my mind nor my taste retained the purity they possessed when, only a few days before, I left my native mountains. I began to relish the flavor of wine, which at first displeased my palate, nor did the feverish thirst it excited, prevent my indulging in it, when pressed by Mr. Trevyllan. I could hear without disgust the worldly, if not misanthropic, sentiments and opinions he loved to utter, and I began to think him a wise, though not a generous-minded man. Such are the deleterious effects on a youthful and ductile mind from an association with the unworthy, even for a short period. Many a time in after days did I find the harsh precepts of Mr. Trevyllan recur to my mind, weakening, if not vanquishing, the noble sentiments instilled by my parents, which partook much more of the chivalrous than of the worldly wise.

*Death, my father taught me was infinitely preferable to dishonor, nay, even to incurring its*

suspicion, and crime he looked on as an irrefragable proof of insanity, which entitled its perpetrator to an asylum in a mad-house. When, excited into confidence by wine, I ventured to reveal these opinions to my guardian, he laughed them to scorn, said that my father had from childhood been a visionary filled with Utopian systems of the perfectibility of human nature, to which, had he lived in the busy world, he must inevitably have fallen a victim, and added that the sooner I got such folly out of my head the better.

"See," observed Mr. Trevyllan, the day after I entered his house, "the advantages derived by my system, over that of your father—look around, the walls of my dwelling are covered with pictures by the best masters, ancient and modern. Their fine colors and beautiful scenery give me pleasure, I confess, but I derive even greater gratification from the reflection that I owe them to my own prudence, and that worldly wisdom which I have through life made the guide of my actions. I admire good pictures, but I laugh in my sleeve when I visit the galleries of collectors and hear the prices they pay. I hide my time until they are either ruined or dead, and then at sales, I pick up for a few pounds what they paid hundreds for; and when these treasures are hung up in my rooms, I look on them with double satisfaction from the recollection of my paying so little for what the original owners paid so much. In the same way, I buy plate at melting prices, for which the previous possessors gave the most enormous sums by the ounce for workmanship. What say you, my lad, to giving four or five shillings an ounce for what cost thirty-five? Books, furniture, glass, china, in short, everything I require, I purchase at sale for less than a quarter of their value, and so the wise man profits by the folly of the foolish."

I entered a public school in a short time after my arrival in London, and here I began to perceive the result of my guardian's advice. Naturally shy and reserved, I had never previously detected in myself the slightest tendency to suspicion; but now, I involuntarily found myself analysing the characters of those around me, and searching for motives for their conduct. Did a schoolfellow, with the unceremonious frankness peculiar to boyhood, make advances of goodwill towards me, a suspicion that some secret motive actuated him instantly crossed my mind, and however open and natural might be his looks and manners, I held back, fearful of giving way to the sympathy he excited in my breast. This I considered to be a proof of prudence and good sense that would, if revealed to my guardian, command his esteem; and although occasionally I might yield to the temptation of a growing friendship, I soon remembered the precepts of Mr. Trevyllan, and kept aloof from placing my confidence in those who confided every thought to me. Nevertheless, when any of my schoolfellows betrayed coldness or reserve towards me, my pride was wounded, and I felt disposed to consider such treatment as an insult. Such were the results of Mr. Trevyllan's counsel and opinions. I never enjoyed the frank companionship which among boys of the same years grows into regard, and cements the friend-

ship that often forms one of the blessings of after age.

My mother's letters were more frequent than I had anticipated. They breathed the warmest affection, and inculcated the strongest caution of preserving the high and chivalrous sense of honor that had been the guiding principle of my father. "He," would she write, "thought an unspotted fame of such vital importance, that I have heard him say he could not survive even the suspicion of a bad action, however conscious he might be of his own freedom from it; and he blessed Providence that he had never been exposed to such a trial."

The opposite opinions of my high-minded and romantic mother, who had all the pride of the noble blood of her country, and the narrow policy and unblushing selfishness that marked those of my guardian, produced the most contending feelings in my breast. My pride, encouraged by that of my mother, gradually increased in proportion to the deterioration of the qualities that might have furnished an excuse, if they could not have redeemed it. I ought to have known that nothing is more incompatible with a high sense of honor, the only stable basis for pride, than suspicion; but, alas! the counsel and the self-complacency of the rich and worldly-minded Mr. Trevyllan had tainted and blinded me to this fact, and I continued proud, when an impartial self-examination would either have taught me humility or prompted me to merit self-esteem.

My reserve, by degrees, alienated from me the companions who were at first desirous of forming a friendship. They drew back, disappointed by the coldness with which I met their advances, and listened with complacency, if not with avidity, to the ill-natured remarks of youths who had from the commencement manifested an ill will towards me. One, however, of my school-fellows, remained firm in his attachment. He was precisely the best-natured and most generous boy in the whole establishment. He shared his purse and all his possessions, with a lavish hand, with his companions; assisted them in their tasks, submitted to punishment for their faults, rather than reveal the real culprits, and in short, was one of the least selfish of human beings. Did any boy get into debt, he had recourse to Neville to extricate him. Did he neglect his lessons, Neville aided him to pass muster. Did a strong boy tyrannize over a weak, Neville protected the latter. Consequently, there was not a dissentient voice to be heard when he was acknowledged to be the best fellow in the world, and the kindest-hearted. It happened one day that Neville was present when I received a letter from my mother, enclosing me five pounds. The note dropped from the letter, and he stooped, took it up, and handed it to me.

"I am glad, Herbert, you are in cash, for I want half these five pounds," said he, as frankly and as carelessly as he would have given them away.

My first impulse was to say, "keep the whole, if you want it;" but after a moment's reflection, I checked myself, and asked, "what he wanted the money for?"

"Hang it! A lender should not question a

borrower," replied he; "it looks as if he would as soon keep his money as lend it. But the truth is, Bentley is dunned for four pounds, and I have only thirty shillings to give him, so I want your two pounds ten to make up the sum."

"If you wanted it for yourself, I should readily lent it," replied I; "but for another, and that other an extravagant —"

"Hold!" interrupted he, "not another word.

If we were entitled to lecture, and censure those we assist, who would ever accept aid at our hands? I have a pleasure in helping my friends out of scrapes. It is, I think, one of the pleasures as well as privileges of friendship. You think otherwise, so there's an end of the matter," and he walked away, looking disappointed, leaving me utterly ashamed of myself. I followed him, entreated him to take the money, nay, would have forced him to accept it, but I could not prevail.

"No, my good fellow, it is impossible! You have *your* notions, and I, *mine*; and now that I know yours, I could not touch your money."

The reflection that Mr. Trevyllan would have approved my conduct on this occasion, failed to silence my self-reproaches, and as I really was not a lover of money, the having saved my two pounds ten offered me no consolation, under them. What must Neville think of me? was a question that occurred to my mind several times during that day, and I longed for an opportunity of explaining to him my self-imposed system of prudence and caution, in order to exonerate myself from the charge of avarice. It became evident that from this time he avoided me, and though mortified by his doing so, will it be believed, that instead of thinking he was justified by my conduct, I began to imagine that Neville, the profuse, the generous Neville, had only formerly shown a friendship towards me to furnish a claim on my purse, should his prodigality to others render such a step necessary?

After having passed a year at school, I expected to return to my mother, to spend the vacation with her, but when I wrote to my guardian to propose it, he stated, that he had decided I should not return to Wales until my education was completed. He urged that my mother had now got accustomed to my absence, and that a visit to her would but renew her regret at parting from me again. This reasoning by no means satisfied me, but from his decision Mr. Trevyllan allowed no appeal. He arranged that I should pass the vacation with him, and thus, unhappily, an opportunity was afforded him of inculcating still more profoundly in my mind, those suspicions of mankind, and that dread of its censure, which, henceforth, became rooted in my heart. Mr. Trevyllan insinuated himself into my confidence, he plied me with wine until I laid bare to him every thought, even to the self-reproaches I had made myself on the subject of Neville; and he laughed to scorn my weakness, as he termed it, while he applauded my prudence in refusing his request.

"This Neville," said he, "is evidently a fool, or a hunter after popularity. He lavishes his money on his companions, thus encouraging their extravagance in order that he may lay them under obligations, and when he no longer

has sufficient to satisfy their demands, he has recourse to you, and finding you too wise to comply with his exactions, he resents it, forsooth, and avoids you."

By degrees, the desire to visit my mother faded away from my mind. Perhaps her letters unconsciously aided the wishes of Mr. Trevyllan on this point, for they were filled with a regret as poignant for the loss of her husband, as when I left her, and I dreaded the dark chamber and ceaseless lamentations to which I believed a meeting with her would inevitably expose me. I was the less compunctious for not urging my guardian to allow me to visit her, as her recent letters informed me that an old friend of her's, lately become a widow like herself, had come to see her. "We were intimate friends in happier times," wrote my mother, "at Seville, where she, then a young wife, accompanied her husband. They were as happy, and loved each other almost as much as your dear father and I did. This worthy man died, leaving her with two daughters—lovely creatures—ill provided with the goods of fortune, and she came to seek sympathy and companionship near me. Similar affliction has drawn closer the bond of friendship between us. Our tears often mingle together, and we find a consolation, mournful though it be, in dwelling on the memory of other days, and on those who formed our happiness. I have fitted up the pretty cottage you may remember at Llantrisant, for Mrs. Maitland, and few days pass in which we do not meet."

The knowledge that she was no longer alone, quieted my conscience, and afforded me pleasure. I wrote to her frequently, and so affectionately, that my letters, which she showed to Mrs. Maitland, interested that lady deeply in my favor. Her daughters, too, were told what a good son I was, and joined, as my mother wrote me, in longing to see the son of their kind friend, their second mother—for so they considered her.

### CHAPTER III.

THE attention with which I listened to the worldly counsel of Mr. Trevyllan, and the docility with which I adopted it, flattered his *amour-propre*, and conciliated his friendship. Young as I was, he was delighted to have instilled into my mind the defects and prejudices of his own, and judged more and more favorably of me in proportion as he remarked my suspicion and distrust of mankind. The coldness of my companions, on which I sometimes animadverted to him, he declared to be caused by their anger at not being able to dupe me; and he asserted that, at school, as in the world, a popular person must either be a dupe, or a dupe; and, as I was too proud to be the last, and too sensible to be the first, I must never expect popularity.

"But Neville," said I, "is the most popular boy in the school; yet, I assure you, he does not want for cleverness. He invariably upholds his own opinions when he believes himself to be in the right, flatters no one, appears, to be regard-

less of flattery; and although his superiority is undisputed, excites no envy."

"I see you are dazzled by this same Neville," replied Mr. Trevyllan; "but, remember, you judge only from appearances. Whatever may be the envy he excites, and that he does excite it there can be no doubt, as never did superiority of any kind escape envy,—the obligations he confers on his companions preclude them from betraying any symptom of their entertaining such a sentiment, and he, poor dupe, will go on lavishing favors on them, and believing in their affection, until some fine day he discovers he has been their dupe."

And yet so inclined was I to like and esteem Neville, that the good feeling he excited in my own breast rendered me well inclined to give credit to the sincerity of the regard professed, or rather evinced towards him by others; that it required all the sophistical warnings and suspicions, so continually instilled into my mind by my guardian, to prevent me from opening my whole soul to him, and endeavoring to win his friendship. It pained me to be thought ill of by Neville; and had he not plainly let me see that he wished to avoid me, I do believe that, in spite of the opinions and advice of Mr. Trevyllan, I would have laid bare to him all that was passing in my heart, and allowed the influence of his healthy mind to heal the canker that was corroding mine. But here, too, pride and mistrust, the besetting sins engendered in my nature, operated to vanquish this strong desire. What, was I to pursue one who evidently shunned me? Was I to expose my failings to one who had already judged, and condemned me, as was proved by his avoidance of all intercourse between us? No, this would be too humiliating even were I sure that my advances towards a renewal of our former good intelligence would be well received; but with a chance of the possibility that he might decline my offered civility, refuse my confidence, and tell his companions that he had done so, I could not stoop to such a step, though my heart yearned for his friendship. I stood alone in the school. I had no friend to share my pleasures or my pains. The boy, whom Neville had broken off intimacy with, no one else wished to seek; and his coldness on the part of my schoolfellows, acting on my pride, operated still more strongly than the advice of Mr. Trevyllan, to increase the hauteur and indifference towards them which I had assumed.

Years rolled on, but my position in the school remained unchanged; for though many of my contemporaries left it for college, or to enter professions, some remained behind; and the new comers who replaced those who departed had imbibed their prejudices against me. Often did I propose to Mr. Trevyllan that I should be placed in another school, where, having no prejudices to contend with, I might make friends; but he laughed these proposals to scorn, declared it would be weak and unmanly to be conquered by those who only avoided, because they could not make me their dupe. He said I must support my position with fortitude, and show no deference to the opinions of persons who felt no good-will towards me, and for whom I consequently could experience none.

"You ought to remember," added he, "that persons who wish to learn to fence must begin with foils. Consider your schoolfellows as foils. Do not let them touch you; and by this means you will be prepared for the more serious combats to which in society every man is exposed, when the foils being thrown away, he must defend himself with real weapons. Leave school, and your enemies will say, 'we drove him away;' and when you meet them in the world, they will be ready to attempt the same game with you that succeeded at school. But maintain your place, let them see you attach no importance to their opinions, and though in future years they may not feel inclined to cultivate your intimacy, they will at least be deterred from molesting you."

Who that has not experienced it, can judge the misery of a youthful heart yearning for affection, but checked by pride from avowing it, and deploring the errors that preclude its growth; errors, too, not natural to the soil, but the forced fruit of an evil cultivator, against whose unhealthy influence the heart has never ceased to rebel? "Put not confidence in man," was the often repeated caution of Mr. Trevyllan. "Never let even your friend—your wife, when you are old enough to have one—acquire the knowledge of any circumstance, the betrayal of which could injure or give you pain. If you commit a fault, conceal it within the most secret recess of your heart, for be assured that man's happiness can never be secure who trusts another."

Such were the reiterated maxims of the person to whom my noble-minded father confided his only son; such the man intrusted with my destiny; and who, fearful that the romantic turn of my poor mother, and the chivalrous feelings that governed her, might counteract his counsels, kept me away from her; and thus not only destroyed the happiness of my youth, but laid up for my maturity the seeds of those failings which have given a color to my after life. During the long and tedious years passed at school, I never had an opportunity of enjoying the humanizing influence of female society. No woman, save his servants, and they were as unfeminine as aught in woman shape could be, ever passed the threshold of Mr. Trevyllan. He invariably spoke of the sex in terms of unmitigated contempt, as weak, capricious, giddy creatures, fit only to be made the toys of our lighter hours, but wholly incapable of becoming rational companions or friends. Often did the image of my absent mother, in her devoted and all-engrossing love to my father while he lived, and her passionate and enduring grief for his loss, rise up to destroy his calumnies of her sex; but I dreaded to name her, lest he should, in his cynicism, utter some taunt that I could not have borne to hear applied to her. This total seclusion from all female society rendered the sex much more attractive in my eyes. Every pretty face I saw, when passing through the streets, appeared almost angelic in my sight, and I endowed its possessor with every amiable and engaging quality, and formed in my mind a little romance, of which she was the imaginary heroine. My dreams were haunted by these ambulating beau-

ties, a chance encounter with whom in the streets made my heart beat quicker, and sent the blood to my cheeks; but such was my timidity, that had I met, one of them alone, and far from the ken of mortal, I should have wanted courage to address her, nay more, would probably have fled from her had she addressed me.

And now I entered college, filled with hope that I might find none of my schoolfellows there, and consequently that a chance remained of forming a favorable impression on my new acquaintances. But this hope was of brief duration. No less than seven of my former companions, if indeed those with whom I held no companionship could thus be termed, had entered Christ Church before me; and not one of the seven possessing the generosity of mind or goodness of heart which characterized Neville, my unpopularity at school, and its causes were soon revealed, probably exaggerated, and I found no one desirous to extend to me the hand of amity, or to question the sentence of exclusion from intimacy, which here, as at school, kept me apart from my contemporaries. How often have I wished that some tangible slight, some premeditated offence, gave me the right to demand reparation from some one of these young men, who, while avoiding all intimacy, were so studiously on their guard not to furnish me with an excuse for questioning their motives, that I could not demand satisfaction. My sensitiveness and susceptibility to take offence now became irritated into morbidness, and was only kept within bounds by the dread of any demonstration of it exposing me to ridicule—a dread which tortured me.

My vacations, as when at school, were passed at Mr. Trevyllan's. Sometimes I accompanied him to the continent, but there, as in London, he lived apart from society, and I, consequently, had no opportunity afforded me of entering it. We spent the mornings in sight-seeing, the evenings in theatres, and returned to England as ignorant of the manners and customs of the persons in whose country we had been sojourning, as if we had never entered it. Among the prejudices of Mr. Trevyllan was a strong dislike to foreigners. "If England contained many bad men, be assured the continent possesses no good ones," would he say. "Foreigners cover over their defects with a thick coating of politeness, that helps to conceal them, rendering them thereby more dangerous, because hidden; whereas, an Englishman is less adroit. You soon find him out; therefore, if I always put forth my feelers before I admit a countryman to acquaintanceship, I take especial care to shun foreigners, as I would plague and pestilence."

Strange to say, these illiberal prejudices failed to make any unfavorable impression on my mind, easily as it had hitherto yielded to the opinions of my guardian. He acknowledged, that he had no personal experience to lead him to the conclusions he had formed with regard to the general turpitude of foreigners; and this acknowledgment induced me, not only to disbelieve his assertions with regard to them, but also to question their justice with regard to our own countrymen. An oppressive weight seemed removed from my breast, the moment I began to



think better of mankind, and I looked on him who had so long poisoned my mind against my fellow men as a slanderer; a sorcerer, who had robbed my youth of happiness, by covering all that was fair and bright with a dark pall, which had chilled and separated me from sympathy. His wise saws, his constant cautions, became odious to me; and not unfrequently did I incur his anger, by defending mankind against his unceasing attacks on it. He declared that after all the pains he had taken to bestow on me the fruit of his own experience, he began to fear I should nevertheless become as credulous a victim to the wicked and designing, as if he had never armed me against them; and added, that my obstinacy in pursuing my own erroneous opinions, unbased as they were by the experience which a long contact with society can alone bestow, was a new proof of the unworthiness of human nature. In escaping from the misanthropy that had so long enthralled me, I was rushing into an opposite error. The world assumed as fair an aspect to my view, after the mental blindness that had obscured my vision, as the blue sky and bright verdure does to one, who, long suffering from cataract, is at length restored to sight. I felt disposed to think all men good, all women fair and pure. The conventional sentiments of virtue, uttered on the stage, not only found an echo in my breast, but I was disposed to believe that the actor who spoke them felt them as profoundly as I did; and the actresses were perfect heroines in my eyes. Their beauty dazzled, their address in enacting their rôles charmed me. Mr. Trevyllan surmised this, though I did not express it. He divined it as accurately as persons who have an antipathy to cats become conscious that one of those animals is in a room, however carefully concealed it may be.

"I dare be sworn," said he, "that you think that girl, who has just left the stage, little less than a divinity. Come, you shall see her!" and taking my arm, he led me out of the box where we sat, spoke to one of the box-keepers, into whose hand he slipped a piece of silver, was guided by him to a private door, through which, after some few minutes parleying on the part of the said box-keeper, we were permitted to enter; and on a piece of gold being given to another man behind the scenes, we were conducted to the dressing-room of the actress, I had only a few minutes previously thought so transcendently lovely. A silver coin to the *femme de chambre*, gained us admission to the sanctuary of her mistress, who, panting and exhausted, reclined in an easy chair, and presented a most appalling and fearful contrast to her I expected to see. The light of a flaring lamp, the odor of which infected the chamber with a most offensive smell, revealed to me a woman, past the meridian of life, whose face was covered with white and red paint, so coarsely laid on, as to leave no doubt of the unskilful artifice, whose lips were smeared with red, and whose eyebrows with black. The gaudy tinsel of headdress, the false stones stuck in her hair, and the careworn and haggard countenance, struck me with such disgust and dismay, that I involuntarily turned away with a loathing I cannot describe. }

"Tell the Signora," said Mr. Trevyllan, "that we ask her pardon for this interruption, occasioned by mistaking her, when on the stage, for an acquaintance," and we hurried from the room.

"That poor painted woman," resumed he, "differs not more from the attractive person she appeared to be when we beheld her at a distance, enacting her part, than do men and women when they are approached closely, and their artifices and deceptions are exposed. Had I not conducted you near that woman, you would have left the theatre with the impression that she was young and beautiful. Let this serve as a lesson to you, not to be imposed on by appearances, and I shall not grudge the money I bestowed to gain you admission to the dressing-room of Signora Malatesta."

Mr. Trevyllan was as delighted at having exposed to me the sad reality of the poor actress's face and person, as he always was when he laid bare the errors and vices of human kind, and I thanked him as little for this last act of friendship, as I had done for former ones of a similar nature. Few are ever pleased by the destruction of an illusion, and fewer still are grateful to the destroyer.

#### CHAPTER IV.

I RETURNED to college after my last tour on the continent, almost as ignorant of mankind as when I left it. I had no friend to welcome me back, to question me about what I had seen in foreign lands, or to draw my attention from self, by interesting me about others. The same cold civilities, limited to the common courtesies of life, which, while they never approach cordiality, leave no opening for questioning why it is withheld, met me at every side, except on that of the masters', who distinguished me by an attention as marked as the avoidance of my fellow-colleagues. A few days after my return to Christ Church, walking alone one fine evening, as was my wont, by the banks of the Isis, I picked up a reticule, and seeing two ladies in advance of me, I concluded that it must appertain to one of them. I hurried on until I overtook them, and presenting the reticule, found that my conjecture had been right; it belonged to the elder of the ladies, who thanked me so warmly for its restoration, that instead of pursuing my walk alone, I entered into conversation with the ladies, and continued with them. The younger was about sixteen, and so extremely beautiful and graceful, that it was impossible for any man to behold, without admiring her. She mingled little in the conversation carried on by her companion and myself, but the few words she uttered were marked by good sense.

"You are not quite unknown to me, Mr. Herbert," observed the elder lady. "My friend Mr. Everett has often spoken to me of your attention to your studies, and the success with which it has been crowned; but are you not too much engrossed by them, and might you not sometimes find leisure to enter society?"

I blushed, stammered, and made some only half-intelligible reply, and this led the lady into a few civil speeches on the pleasure my society would afford the circumscribed, but not unintellectual circle of which she formed a member, and to which every student of good acquirements and irreproachable conduct was welcome. I thought, but perhaps it might only be fancy, that the fair young creature who walked by the side of the elder lady, looked at me, as if she too would have been glad if the reasoning of her friend induced me to enter that social circle ready to open for my reception, but a deep blush and down-cast lids prevented my ascertaining, from a further inspection of that fair face, how far my conjecture was correct.

"This is my niece, Miss Melville, Mr. Herbert, who only arrived last evening, at Oxford, from London, where she has been finishing her education, if such a task can indeed ever be finished; for do we not find, every day that passes over our heads, brings us some fresh knowledge, notwithstanding that the more we acquire, the less we find we possess?"

The deep blush had faded from the cheek of Miss Melville, leaving it so delicately fair (not pale) that I thought she looked even more lovely than when it was suffused with rose color. I was assenting to the justice of the elder lady's observation, when suddenly two of my fellow-collegians approached us, and saluted my new acquaintance. They were, by her, presented to her niece, to whom they immediately addressed some very animated compliments, expressed their long impatience to have the happiness of being made known to her, and their satisfaction at her becoming an inhabitant of Oxford. The young lady appeared to be more embarrassed than pleased by their attentions, which her aunt observing came to her aid, and told the gentlemen that Miss Melville, not being accustomed to compliments, would, she was sure, readily dispense with them, and prefer a more rational conversation. The truth was, that both the young men, being passionate admirers of female beauty, were evidently captivated by hers, and each, fearful of being rivalled by his friend, endeavored to surpass him in the dangerous art of flattery, in the hope of propitiating her favor. She received their compliments with as much coldness and reserve as was consistent with politeness, while I, an anxious observer of what was passing, felt as much pleased with her maidenly and dignified behavior, as I was displeased by their forwardness and presumption. A formal bow was the only recognition of acquaintance that passed between these gentlemen and myself, and they, confining all their attention to Miss Melville, left her aunt to maintain a conversation with me. Mrs. Scuddamore, for such I discovered was the name of this lady, was a widow, and resided with a brother, a well-known and much respected Professor at Christ Church. Her husband had been a colonel in the army, and a very distinguished officer, with whom she had not only constantly lived with his regiment, but with whom she had actually made more than one campaign. A well-informed and sensible woman—she had many excellent quali-

ties, which had endeared her to the brother officers of her husband—the elder ones considering her in the light of a sister, while the younger looked on her as a mother, whose good advice and kind offices were ever at their service.

Mrs. Scuddamore made several ineffectual attempts to make the conversation general, but my fellow-collegians avoided entering into it, confining themselves to a complimentary strain of remarks addressed exclusively to Miss Melville, and I took especial care to show as decided a desire to refrain from any interchange of words with them, as they did towards me. I could see that Mrs. Scuddamore observed this mutual avoidance with surprise. She became silent and *distracted*, proposed returning home, and I was more than half-tempted to make my bow and retire, but a dread lest such a step might be construed to my disadvantage checked me, and I continued by the side of Mrs. Scuddamore until she reached her abode, at the door of which, although invited to enter, I took my leave. I was glad to find that my fellow-collegians also declined entering the house, as it would retard the explanation Mrs. Scuddamore could not fail to demand relative to the marked coldness existing between them and me. They could only explain it by some statements disadvantageous to me. The simple fact, which they would be sure to assert, that I had no friends in college, that, in short, I was avoided, would in itself be ample cause to justify Mrs. Scuddamore for declining any further acquaintance with me. All these thoughts presented themselves vividly to my mind as I left the door, and pursued my way to Christ Church, the two gentlemen crossing to the opposite side of the street, though pursuing the same direction. The beautiful face and thoughtful eyes of Miss Melville haunted me, and mingled with the painful emotions excited by reflecting on the evil impression which the conduct of the young men was calculated to make on the minds of those who witnessed it. I almost regretted that I had formed any acquaintance with the ladies, greatly as I admired one of them, so certain did I feel that some disagreeable termination would inevitably attend it, owing to the dislike entertained towards me in college; and I deliberated with myself whether it would not be more dignified and consistent with the respect due to myself to avoid all further intercourse with Mrs. Scuddamore, and her fair niece, than to wait the chance of their taking a similar step towards me. And then came the thought that my refraining from taking advantage of the invitation of Mrs. Scuddamore, pressed too with a warmth and friendliness that had evidently displeased the young men present when it was given, would amount to a tacit acknowledgment that I was unworthy of her kindness, and this thought added to my chagrin. After much deliberation I determined to pay her a visit the following day, and let her reception decide my future intercourse with these ladies. I would judge whether or not they had imbibed any prejudice against me from the coolness of my fellow collegians, and if I found them as well disposed as before, I would certainly cultivate an acquaintance which possessed so much at-

traction for me. I dreamt of Miss Melville that night, and perpetrated a sonnet addressed to her next morning.

I was, however, far from viewing my sudden passion for Miss Melville in its true light. Nay, had any one attempted to explain it to me as the natural result of my previous mode of existence, I would have resented the suggestion with anger, as an insult. I persuaded myself that she, and she only could have awakened the dormant passion in my heart, which at sight of her burst into an inextinguishable flame. I endowed her with every charm, every accomplishment, with the reckless profusion with which only youthful lovers can enrich the object of their first attachment, and having created this idol, I, like Pygmalion, became in love with my own work. A new world opened to me, and Miss Melville was the enchantress, at the touch of whose magic wand the doors of this Paradise flew asunder to give me entrance. All nature seemed changed. The skies were brighter, the earth greener, the trees more beautiful, the flowers more fragrant. And all this had been effected by one with the tones of whose voice my ear was yet unfamiliar, with whose character, disposition, and modes of thinking I was a stranger! Oh! ye young beauties, who, when ye regard your images in a mirror, count on the triumphs the lovely faces reflected in it can achieve, how little do ye doubt that the charms on which ye gaze with delighted vanity, potent though they be, are far less so, than those with which the ardent imagination of a lover can endow you! Never did nature create aught so transcendently fair as that ideal "which youthful poets fancy when they love," and every youthful lover becomes a poet.

## CHAPTER V.

I CALLED at Mrs. Scuddamore's, and was admitted. My reception was more than polite, it was cordial. That lady had a frankness of demeanor as well as of manner that soon set every one at his ease. Miss Melville was seated at her tambour frame when I entered, and a soft blush mantled her face as she raised it to return my salute. If I had thought her beautiful the previous evening, how much more lovely did she now appear in my eyes, her finely shaped head no longer, as then, concealed by a bonnet, and her exquisitely modelled bust, uncovered by a shawl, its delicate proportions revealed by the close fitting white morning robe in which she was attired. Her snowy throat, round as a pillar of marble, supported her head with a peculiar grace and dignity. I could hardly withdraw my eyes from her; and she, as if conscious that they were fixed on her face, seldom raised hers, but pursued her work, her small, rounded, white hand and taper fingers appearing to singular advantage while employed in passing and re-passing the gay-colored silken threads.

"I was afraid you would not come," said Mrs. Scuddamore, "for you are, I have taken into my head, a little *savage*—come, confess, am I not

right? You must get over this; for nothing mars a man's success in life so much as shyness."

The color rose to my face as well as to Miss Melville's at this well meant but *brusque* remark of her aunt's, and I felt my admiration of her increased by this sympathy between us.

"You are going to tell me it is constitutional,—that you can't help it," resumed the lady; "but that is all nonsense. I have known young ensigns join their regiments, to whom one could not say 'Good morrow,' without their blushing like a boarding-school girl; just as Georgina did two minutes ago—I suppose for the sake of keeping you company—yet before they had been a month at mess, they would have been the first to have laughed at the *mauvaise honte* of a new comer, so completely had they conquered their shyness."

Miss Melville's face was now a deep rose-color, and she bent lower than before over her embroidery frame to conceal it, while I muttered something almost as incomprehensible to myself as to Mrs. Scuddamore, about the seclusion of a college life tending to encourage shyness.

"But your fellow-collegians—and I know several—are not shy," said the lady. "On the contrary, I think they seem rather in the other extreme. For example, the two young men who joined us last evening, and who nearly overpowered Georgina, whom they had never previously seen, with compliments."

I felt my embarrassment increase every moment during this scene. I knew not what to say, and Mrs. Scuddamore was not a woman to let a subject drop when once she had commenced it. I endeavored to divert her attention to other topics—talked of the environs, the walks, the rides, and that unfailling subject to an Englishman—the weather.

"Come, come," replied Mrs. Scuddamore, "I see you want to shirk the subject, and I won't let you. I was so long a sort of mother to a set of young men like yourself, in my dear husband's regiment, that I can't help thinking myself still privileged, as then, to give advice, or call to account. Why were you so distant and reserved with your fellow collegians last evening?"

"We know little of each other, and therefore are on very distant terms," was my stupid answer.

"And whose fault is it?" demanded my persecutor. "Do they avoid your acquaintance, or is it you who will not encourage theirs?"

"I believe the avoidance is mutual."

"But there must be some cause, some motive for this; and as a man of spirit, the person conscious of being avoided ought to come to an explanation with him or them who showed him such a slight. I am the widow of an old soldier, as brave a man as ever commanded a battalion; and he, I am sure, would have thought very ill of a young officer who allowed another to avoid him without demanding satisfaction. It won't do to say 'he avoids me, and I avoid him.' No; a man must permit no one to have the air of declining his acquaintance, however he may be disposed to undervalue the person offering such a slight. The laws of honor—and I admit no other in such affairs—are very strict in such

matters. I have known a hundred quarrels, and as many duels, for similar causes; and I advise you, if you wish to maintain the respect due to every gentleman, never to allow a man to assume the air of avoiding your acquaintance."

"Dear aunt!" interrupted Miss Melville, casting an appealing glance at the soldier-like Mrs. Scuddamore.

"Dear aunt, what?" reiterated the aunt. But the bashful girl became silent, and the lady resumed: "Ah! I see, that foolish Georgy is afraid I may get you into a duel. And what if I do? Better one now than several perhaps hereafter, when some of those young men who believe they shun you, while you believe you avoid them, may hereafter meet you in society, and their air of avoidance may lead to disagreeable results. Honor before everything, is my maxim. It was that of Colonel Scuddamore, than whom a better judge on such points never existed. I remember once, when a young officer joined his regiment, some of the juniors took a dislike to his dress, the cut of his hair, his accent, or some other equally efficient cause of objection, and arranged among themselves to send him to Coventry, as it was called, but which means, shunning intercourse with a man. The young fellow, a brave lad too, took fire at this marked coldness; and not knowing on which of some six or eight young men he was to fix a quarrel, wrote a challenge to each. The Colonel discovered it, called a meeting of the officers in question, and insisted on knowing the cause of the challenge. They confessed it had originated in their avoidance of the young ensign. He demanded the cause. No reason could be assigned, except that the new comer's air and manner had not pleased them. 'I consider myself as good a judge on this point, gentlemen,' said he, 'as you. I see nothing to find fault with in the air and manner of Mr. —; and much as I disapprove of duelling in my regiment, I am forced to admit that Mr. — could do nothing less than what he has done, after the slight offered to him. I will allow no man to be sent to Coventry in my regiment; for, should a man merit such a proceeding, I will take care he does not remain in it. I will speak to this young officer, and bring him to reason; and I insist that every one of you who have shown him a slight, will apologise. Men of honor should ever be as ready to express regret when in the wrong, as to maintain their opinions when in the right. I will dine at the mess to-day, where I expect to see perfect harmony restored; and this young man, who has proved his sense of honor and courage, treated with the cordiality to which, as a brave brother soldier, he is entitled.' This was the way in which Colonel Scuddamore settled such matters, and this is the way in which I would advise every man to act when a slight is offered to him."

Mrs. Scuddamore had hardly concluded this last sentence, when Percival and Mordaunt, my two fellow-collegians, were announced, and entered the room. They looked surprised and displeased when they perceived me, and their bow of recognition was so slight as to exempt me from the necessity of returning it. Both approached Miss Melville, and, drawing a chair

on each side of her, seemed disposed to forget the presence of Mrs. Scuddamore and myself. I felt that lady's eyes were on me, and this increased my perturbation. I was inclined to leave the room; indeed, I arose for that purpose, but a moment's reflection induced me to resume my seat, fully determined to take an early opportunity of seeking an explanation with the gentlemen present. It was no want of courage that had hitherto withheld me from such a measure, and often and often had I contemplated it, but pride—ungovernable pride—strange as the assertion may seem, had prevented my putting it into execution. What, was I to give them the triumph of thus acknowledging that they had offended me, when I had invariably maintained the air of having avoided them? But now that I had been told by another, and that other a woman too, what was the right conduct to pursue, I determined no longer to submit to what in my secret soul I felt to be a premeditated train of slights.

"I was just repeating to Mr. Herbert," said Mrs. Scuddamore, "an incident that occurred in the regiment of my husband relative to a young officer, whom, for no earthly reason, some of his brother officers were disposed to send to Coventry, and for which the young officer called them out."

"They probably had some cause for wishing to send him to Coventry?" observed Mordaunt.

"For my part," remarked Percival, "I see no reason why one should. The world is large enough for every man to find persons who do not inspire him with dislike, without compelling the necessity of his associating with those who do."

"Ah, well! had you been in my husband's regiment, he would have insisted on your behaving with politeness to your brother officers, however you might have disliked them, unless they had indeed behaved ill to you. Colonel Scuddamore never allowed symptoms of dislike to be displayed towards each other by his officers."

"Perhaps the officers of his regiment were not over fastidious in their tastes, and consequently were not given to entertain dislikes?" said Mordaunt, assuming a supercilious air.

"They were as gentlemanly a corps of officers as any in the army," replied Mrs. Scuddamore, turning red in the face; "and his example and knowledge of discipline were too well calculated to render them so, to admit a doubt of the fact."

"Heaven forbid that I should call the merit of the colonel or his regiment in question! It would be unpardonable in me who have so often been enlightened on the subject!" observed Mordaunt, with a sarcastic smile.

"It would be unpardonable in any one who ever heard of Colonel Scuddamore," retorted his widow, warmly; "for his bravery and gentlemanlike conduct were acknowledged, not only by those who knew him, but by all who ever heard his name mentioned."

"Your suffrage on these points, Madam, is quite sufficient to satisfy Mordaunt and myself. Ladies, and particularly those who have gone through a campaign, and lived in barracks, must be excellent judges, not only of discipline and

gentlemanly manners, but also of refinement." And Percival assumed a mock gravity while uttering this remark, that indicated his intention of quizzing Mrs. Scuddamore.

"I don't think that you, sir, can be much of a judge on the subject we are conversing on," replied Mrs. Scuddamore; "for a knowledge of gentlemanly conduct, or refinement, would prevent your attempting to banter a woman."

"I attempt to banter you?" interrupted Percival. "By Jove, I would as soon attempt it with the most experienced field-officer in the army!"

"And I," said Mordaunt, "who look on you, Madam, as the best authority on all military subjects, only regret that you do not give to the world at large the fruits of your experience. Don't you, Percival?"

"I feel that I was wrong, gentlemen, to waste my time in attempting to make you sensible on points in which it is now clear to me you are very defective in knowledge; and, to prevent my making a similar mistake again, I must request that in future you will not honor me with your visits."

"A request, which, had it been made two days before"—(and here Mordaunt looked in a peculiar manner at Miss Melville)—"I should have acceded to with much more readiness than at present, although it must have deprived me of the advantage of hearing the admirable exordium on military discipline, with which I have this day been favored." And here he bowed to Mrs. Scuddamore with mock humility.

This impertinence towards a woman, and one, too, whose age entitled her to respect, I could no longer resist from noticing. I was not sorry either, for being furnished with a plausible excuse for resenting my own private wrongs, while apparently only defending those of a woman. I therefore stood up, and addressing Mr. Percival said, that, "As Mrs. Scuddamore desired a discontinuance of the future visits of himself and his friend, it would be, I conceived, more agreeable to her to have the present one abridged."

"I do not see what right you have to become the interpreter of the lady's thoughts or wishes," observed Percival, insolently.

"And I," said Mordaunt, "must request you not to meddle in anything that has the slightest reference to me."

"Oh, no, Mr. Herbert!" exclaimed Miss Melville, standing up in evident trepidation, and approaching me.

"Georgina, my dear, be seated; leave these gentlemen to settle their little differences," said Mrs. Scuddamore; "Mr. Herbert has acted precisely as Colonel Scuddamore would have done in a similar case."

"Then I am to understand that you are the champion of this lady?" And Percival bowed to Mrs. Scuddamore—"that you, in short, wish to dictate to me with regard to the length of my visit?"

"Yes," answered I; "I will see no lady treated with rudeness in my presence without marking my disapproval of such conduct."

"You shall hear from me, sir."

"And from me too," added Mordaunt, and both left the room, bowing to the ladies.

"Oh! dear aunt, how dreadful," exclaimed Miss Melville, her beautiful face pale with terror. "Surely you will not allow Mr. Herbert to expose his life about such a trifle."

"As the widow of a brave and distinguished soldier, I cannot advise Mr. Herbert, were he even my own son, to pass over the ungentlemanly conduct of these men."

"No representations, madam, could induce me to deny these gentlemen the satisfaction they consider they have a right to demand," replied I, flattered by the interest and alarm the lovely girl before me evinced in my favor. I felt that to excite this interest, I would readily risk my life; and the thought of being able at length to prove that a want of courage was not the cause of my having hitherto allowed the marked coldness of my fellow-collegians to pass unquestioned, filled me with satisfaction. The reflection that I might kill, or be killed, natural to a thinking being, at such a moment, never entered my mind. The weight of a mountain seemed removed from my breast by an opportunity having been afforded me of vindicating my wounded feelings—so long oppressed by a sense of being slighted, if not insulted. To fight, too, in the cause of Mrs. Scuddamore, was like a homage offered to her beautiful niece, and this notion added to my alacrity to meet Percival and Mordaunt.

"I am really gratified, my dear Mr. Herbert, to observe your cheerfulness under present circumstances," said Mrs. Scuddamore. "My brave husband would have approved it, and would have gladly lent his presence as your friend."

The word friend jarred on my ear, by reminding me that I had no one to whom I could appeal as mine, and as this recollection flashed on my mind, I became embarrassed.

"I hope," resumed Mrs. Scuddamore, "that you have some person worthy of confiding in on this occasion. A man brave without being overbearing or domineering, firm without being obstinate, polite without the least obsequiousness—such is the man into whose hands you ought to intrust the arrangement of this affair."

Shame prevented me from avowing that I had no friend. Might it not be received as a tacit acknowledgment that I had not merited one? I said something about not knowing any one possessed of the various qualifications which the lady had named as necessary in the person who was to act as a friend in a duel.

"I do know one," replied Mrs. Scuddamore, "who will, I am sure, at my request, take the whole management of this business into his hands. The person in question is an old brother officer of my husband, placed on half-pay, and living within a mile of Oxford. I will instantly write to him, and he will, I am quite sure, see you, and communicate with the friends chosen by Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt."

I took my leave, not however without receiving particular and repeated injunctions from Mrs. Scuddamore, to avoid being placed with my back to the horizon when on the ground,

and not to wear a light colored waistcoat. On entering college, I found a challenge from Percival, and another from Mordaunt, desiring me to name a friend who could arrange with the gentlemen they had selected, where and when the meeting was to take place. I felt certain that both my antagonists had anticipated, with some degree of satisfaction, the difficulty in which I should be placed to find a friend, while they, living in habits of intimacy with their fellow-collegians, might choose from a number the individual who was to witness their killing, or being killed. I sat down and wrote a letter to my mother, to be sent her in case I fell. With no less than two duels on my hands, the chances of this catastrophe were against me, and as this fact occurred to me, I became conscious of an emotion as new as it was strange. It was not fear. No, not a shade of that entered into my feelings, but the thought that I might never more see my poor mother, never behold another day, sobered me, and opened a spring of tenderness towards my parent that brought a moisture to my eyes, and would have flooded hers, had they perceived the expressions it prompted.

## CHAPTER VI.

A KNOCK at my door announced a visitor. When admitted, a tall thin elderly man, with scanty locks, whitened by time, stood before me—he wore a black stock, a blue coat, and military boots. “Your name, I believe, sir, is Herbert,” said he. I bowed assent, and requested him to be seated.

“I have called on you by desire of Mrs. Scuddamore to offer my services as a friend in a duel, which I understand is to be the consequence of some words which passed between you and two of your fellow-collegians. As an old soldier I have had some little experience in such affairs, and will gladly make it available to you, Mrs. Scuddamore having expressed to me the interest she feels for you.”

I bowed my thanks, and said something about my gratitude to that lady.

“Yes, sir, she deserves respect and esteem, not only as the widow of one of the bravest and most honorable of men, but as a lady who joins to all the virtue and goodness of her sex, all the heroic courage and high sense of honor that appertains to the most distinguished of ours. ‘I tell you, Captain Brady,’ said she to me, ‘that had you not been within reach to go out with this young man, I do believe I would have assumed male attire, put on for the nonce the military address of your gallant colonel, my ever-to-be-lamented husband, and gone to the ground with him.’ And she would have done it, Sir; for such is her sense of honor, that she could not bear to have you left unprovided with a friend on such an occasion.”

All this was spoken with the utmost gravity, and with a strong Hibernian accent, and it was plain that Captain Brady, though he saw little to wonder at, saw much to admire in the military

ardor of the widow of his colonel. I wrote a few lines to Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt, to name Captain Brady as the friend who would be ready to meet theirs, to arrange time and place for our rencontre; and having despatched my notes, we awaited the result. During the time that intervened, my new acquaintance informed me that his health having suffered from several wounds received in action, he had been compelled to retire on half-pay, and had selected the vicinity of Oxford solely for the purpose of being near Mrs. Scuddamore, in order to be at all times ready to receive her commands.

“There was not an officer in her husband’s regiment, Sir,” continued he, “who would not have been glad to consider himself as much under her command, as they had been proud to serve under that of their gallant colonel, for she was as much adored in the regiment as he was beloved and respected. She was the mother of the young officers, Sir, their mistress and adviser; and the sister and friend of the old. The very private soldiers worshipped her, while the dread of incurring her bad opinion preserved their wives from the levity and bad conduct which too often marks the soldiers’ wives. She established schools for girls, over which she presided; while the colonel personally superintended those for the men and boys, and she engaged every officer’s wife to follow her good example; forming a little circle of female society in the regiment, remarkable for decorum, agreeability, and good nature. Such, Sir, was Mrs. Scuddamore. No wonder, then, that all who had opportunities of knowing her, should esteem and reverence her, and be ready, like me, to fulfil her commands.”

The friends of Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt, having now come to arrange preliminaries with Captain Brady, he saw them in another room. They at first, as I afterwards learned, sought to banter the old soldier, and proposed conditions to which he would not accede, but they soon discovered that he was not a man to be imposed on; and when the arrangements for my double duel were completed, he astonished the gentlemen who acted for Percival and Mordaunt, by informing them that when my affairs were settled, he must demand satisfaction from both of those individuals, for the want of respect evinced towards the widow of his late chief by them. It was in vain that the seconds declared that their friends having had no disagreement with Captain Brady, they could not be called on to fight with him; he persisted in stating, that a want of respect towards the wife of his colonel, was the greatest offence that could be offered to him, and that he must receive the *amende honorable* for it.

I went to the ground, accompanied by Captain Brady, and an old brother in arms of his, a Captain Collyer, who lived with him. The distance was measured, I was placed opposite my adversary, Mr. Percival; Mr. Mordaunt being at a little distance, ready to take his place when I had done with his friend. We were to fire at a signal given by our seconds. My shot took away a corner of the skirt of Mr. Percival’s coat, while his went through the crown of my hat, within an inch of my head. My adversary, being the challenger, was asked if he were sat-



ified, and having answered in the affirmative, an answer, I believe, occasioned by the certainty that he was afterwards to stand a shot from Captain Brady, we bowed to each other, and Mr. Mordaunt took the place of Percival. The same ceremony was gone through. We fired—I was untouched, but my adversary fell on the earth. For a few moments I was horror-struck. I believed he was dead, or dying, and I rushed up to the spot where he was lying, his second and Percival supporting him. He was pale as death, but when his coat and waistcoat were opened, it was found that my ball had merely grazed the skin of his right side, over the ribs, and passed out through his garments behind, inflicting only a skin wound, which, however, dyed his clothes with blood. His fall was, I suppose, occasioned by the shock. One thing, however, was certain, which was, that he believed himself mortally wounded, nor could the assertions to the contrary made by his friends lessen his alarm.

"I know something of these matters, young gentleman," said Captain Brady, "and I can assure you your wound is only a scratch, of which, in a couple of days, you will bear scarcely a mark. I had hoped, that if you are now satisfied with regard to Mr. Herbert, you would, on the spot, afford me the satisfaction I demand, and so have the business over at once. If, however, you prefer it, I shall be at your service to-morrow, or next day."

The disconsolate countenance of Mr. Mordaunt was almost ludicrous. He shook his head, and pronounced with a tragic air,

"They jest at scars who never felt a wound."

"That cannot apply to me, Sir," replied Captain Brady, angrily, "for I have no less than fourteen wounds on my body, received in the service of my country, and three balls which never could be extracted. But to conclude, are you satisfied with Mr. Herbert, or do you wish another shot?"

"I am quite satisfied, Sir, perfectly so; and as I have given you no offence, I really think it unreasonable that I should be expected to fight again?"

"If you will apologize, that is, write a proper letter to ask pardon of the lady whom you offended by your *persiflage*, I will not insist on your fighting."

"I have no objection," was the reply, the speaker making wry faces and sundry contortions, indicative of the uneasiness he was suffering from his wound.

"I will dictate the apology, Sir," resumed Captain Brady, "and my second as well as yours, will add their signatures to it."

"Hang it, Mordaunt! don't let the Captain carry it all his own way. Stand another shot, man. Your wound is only skin deep."

"Why should I stand another shot, Percival, when I am satisfied?"

"You ought to consult your second. You placed your honor in his hands, and should abide by his decision."

The second was a good-tempered, good-natured young man, and, moreover, he saw that Mor-

daunt had had enough of fighting, so he gave it as his opinion, "that Mr. Mordaunt, having been wounded, need not be expected to fight again, and that an apology to a lady was perfectly consistent with the laws of honor;" a decision that evidently afforded perfect satisfaction to Mr. Mordaunt.

"You, I presume, Sir," said Captain Brady, addressing Mr. Percival, "will have no objection to our settling our quarrel at once."

"Not the least, Sir; the sooner the better."

The ground was again measured, the signal given, the adversaries fired. Captain Brady was not touched, but Mr. Percival had two of the fingers of his left hand shot off, when the seconds interfered, and would not allow another shot to be exchanged, as Percival proposed, after having wrapped his hand in his handkerchief with perfect *sang-froid*. It was agreed on the spot, that to prevent the consequences which a knowledge of the duels would inevitably entail on collegians, the whole affair was to be kept a secret, and the bursting of a gun was to be alleged as the cause of the loss of Percival's fingers.

"But my wound; how is that to be explained?" inquired Mordaunt.

"It can only be discovered by your washerwoman," replied Captain Brady, "who can be told it was the scratch of a pin;" a remark which occasioned considerable hilarity in all save him at whom it was levelled. The apology was written by Captain Brady, signed by Mordaunt, and attested by his second and Captain Collyer.

"And now, young gentleman," said the worthy Irishman to me, "accept the offered friendship of an old soldier. You have conducted yourself all through this affair as an honorable and brave man, who is worthy of esteem."

And so saying, he took his departure, leaving me more self-satisfied than I had been for years, in the consciousness of having vindicated my honor.

Nor was I unmindful of the effect likely to be produced on the mind of Miss Melville by this duel. Women are prone to think favorably of him who is ready to resent any slight offered to them, and if she betrayed so much interest for my safety before the duel, might I not anticipate a kind reception when I again presented myself to her, certain as I felt that Captain Brady would not omit anything in the narration of the circumstance that could tend to raise me in the estimation of both ladies. Yes, I would certainly call on them that evening, to receive the meed of their approval.

## CHAPTER VII.

FILLED with pleasurable anticipations of my coming interview with Mrs. Scudamore and her beautiful niece, I entered my room, and found a letter in an unknown hand, which had arrived while I had been absent. It contained intelligence of the sudden death of Mr. Trevy.

lan, which had occurred the preceding morning, and required my presence in town for the opening of the will.

How strange and unfathomable is the heart of man! My first thought on reading the letter was regret at being compelled to leave Oxford without seeing Miss Melville; without beholding her bright eyes sparkle, and her fair cheek suffused with blushes of pleasure at our meeting; while the duel, which had, I felt certain, caused her the utmost alarm and anxiety, was still so recent and fresh in her memory. I had looked forward to a meeting at the present time with such a conviction, that with so artless a nature as hers, it would draw forth some unconscious and involuntary demonstrations of the secret preference which I hoped I had awakened in her heart, that I could not abandon the self-promised pleasure without great disappointment and regret: and yet, unfeeling as this may appear, I was, nevertheless, shocked, if not grieved, at the news just received. There is something in the sudden death of one with whom we have been for years living in habits of intimacy, that produces a strong impression on the mind—and I felt this; for, although the deceased was, not a person to awaken affection, or to experience sympathy, nevertheless, he had been invariably kind to me; and, in the gratitude which his goodness created, I was disposed to forget the different traits in his character which had so often displeased, aye, and worse, which had produced so bad an effect on my own mind, and, by so doing, had entailed annoyances on me, the result of which might influence my destiny through life.

I notified the necessity of my departure to the proper authority, and set out immediately for London. I was received with such marked obsequiousness by the two upper servants of the late Mr. Trevyllan, that it instantly struck me that they supposed I was left heir to his property. Their alacrity to wait on me, their desire to anticipate my wants and wishes, was evident, and their affected regret for their late master was so ill played, that no one could be imposed on by it. It is true they assumed a lugubrious countenance and tone of voice when they spoke of their poor master, but no semblance of a tear moistened their eyes, no remembered acts of generosity or goodness on his part loosened their tongues to praise him, now that he was no more, and his mortal remains were left unattended, unregarded, in the solitary chamber of death, while they devoted all their thoughts and care to propitiate him who they believed would succeed to his property.

"Two more rapacious harpies I have never encountered than the two upper servants of my poor friend," said Mr. Vise, one of the executors, to me, the day of my arrival. "I do believe they concealed his death several hours from me, in order to gain time to rob him before I could place the seals on his effects. I have been compelled several times to reprove their neglect of his remains. Ah! Mr. Herbert, if the life of an old bachelor be a cheerless and dreary one, the death-bed is an awful scene. Left to the tender mercies of hirelings, careless of his comfort now when they know he can never more reprehend

or punish their neglect: no tender partner of his life to smoothe his pillow, and watch his every glance: no affectionate son, no fond and duteous daughter, to hover round his dying bed, to wipe the moisture from his brow, to lift the cup to his lip: no faltering voice, tremulous from affection, to read the word of God, or to pray: no tender hand to close his eyes: but in the place of those dear relatives, paid menials, who serve but for hire, and who wait but for death, for which they are impatient, in order to plunder; who mock the dead, who can no longer deter them from indulging in their rapaciousness and cupidity, and who long to enjoy unmolested the fruits of their dishonesty. These servants declare, that, finding their late master had not rung his bell in the morning, as usual, they had gone to his chamber, where they found him dead. Now, the usual hour of my poor friend's ringing his bell was eight in the morning, and supposing that they did not enter his room until ten o'clock, two hours after the usual hour of his awaking, how came it that they called in no physician until half-past twelve o'clock, two hours after?

"Dr. Morrington informed me that he was entering his carriage precisely at half-past twelve, when Turner, the butler of Mr. Trevyllan, came to summon him to his master, whom he stated he had just discovered, to all appearance, lifeless in his bed. This looks very suspicious, does it not? and engenders various vague and painful surmises in my mind. Who knows, but that if our poor friend had been attended to in time, he might have been saved! It is most painful to think what might have occurred in his last hours, left solely in the hands of these persons. Poor Trevyllan, too, was very imprudent. He often boasted to me of his sagacity in securing the services of his domestics for much less wages than are generally given, by holding out to them the prospect of being well provided for at his death; and I have seen him laugh in the anticipation of their disappointment when the contents of his will should be made known, and that they found he had cheated their hopes. I find that several boxes were removed from the house at six o'clock the morning of his death, that is, four hours before, as they state, they were aware of that event. I have sent to the coroner, in order that an inquest may be held, and a strict investigation be gone into, for I cannot divest my mind of very painful suspicions."

The inquest was held, and in the investigation it came out, that the housemaid heard her master's bell ring at about twelve o'clock at night, he having gone to bed at eleven. She was exact about the hour she heard the bell ring, for she had only just got into bed, having remained up later than usual to do some needlework for herself, and she heard the house-clock strike twelve, four or five minutes before. Knowing that her master's night-bell rang into the butler's room, she concluded he would hear, and attend to it, but mentioned the circumstance next morning to the housekeeper, who said she must be mistaken, for that in her room, which was very near Mr. Trevyllan's, she heard no bell.

The housekeeper appeared angry when she persisted in saying, she had positively heard the bell. The kitchen-maid told the house-maid

that when she came down stairs at six o'clock in the morning she found a hackney-coach at the hall-door, nearly filled with chests and boxes, into which a man, whose face she did not see, he was so wrapped up, got, and the coach was hurriedly driven off when she appeared at the door.

The kitchen-maid, alarmed, looked around the house to see if anything was wrong, or missing; met the housekeeper on the stairs, to whom she communicated the circumstance, as also her intention of calling the butler; but was told by the housekeeper to do no such thing, and to mind her own business. The housekeeper never came down stairs before eight o'clock, but that particular day she was down at six. The butler did not make his appearance until nine o'clock, nor was the death of Mr. Trevyllan made known in the house until twelve. Several times previously to that hour, she, when in the front area, had seen the butler going backwards and forwards through the hall door with a large cloak on, beneath which he seemed to have some bulky packages. The housemaid stated, that Mr. Trevyllan's breakfast was always served at nine o'clock, but on that morning no preparation for breakfast had been made; and on her remarking this fact to the housekeeper, at about half past nine, that she had said, "True, I suppose Mr. Turner has forgotten it;" and she went herself to the butler's pantry, and placed the breakfast things ready on the tray—a thing which she, the housemaid, had never before seen her do.

The *autopsie* having taken place, it was declared that Mr. Trevyllan had died of apoplexy; and the verdict of the jury was, that suspicious circumstances having occurred, implicating the housekeeper, and butler with having concealed their master's death for several hours after they must have been cognisant of that fact, and having sent packages secretly out of the house, it was advisable they should be taken into custody, and retained until a strict examination of the property, to be compared with the inventories, should prove whether or not any portion of it was deficient. It was found that the inventories given up by Turner and the housekeeper by no means corresponded with those produced by Mr. Vise, the executor, although it was stated on the back of each of these last, that the butler and housekeeper had duplicates of them. It appeared that these persons were not aware of the existence of the duplicates until their production, and had destroyed the original ones, causing false inventories to be drawn up, which omitted the various articles of value, to a very large amount, which they had from time to time abstracted, with the intention of possessing themselves of, but which they had kept ready packed in the house, lest at any time the articles should be missed, but which they had sent away when they believed themselves safe from discovery, by the death of their master; little dreaming that he had guarded against their cupidity.

They were taken into custody; a reward was offered by Mr. Vise in the public papers to the hackney coachman who had conveyed away the boxes from Mr. Trevyllan's door on the morning *in question*. The promised reward brought the coachman to claim it, and led to the discovery of

all the stolen property, worth several hundred pounds, which was restored to Mr. Vise. The two culprits were lodged in prison, to await their trial; and now the will was opened. A bequest of five thousand pounds to Mr. Vise; one of double that sum, as well as his plate, linen, china, glass, and books, to me; and the rest of his fortune, a very large one, to public charities, comprised the contents. His house, also, was bequeathed to me.

Thus died a man whose whole life had been passed in a total and reckless disregard of his fellow-men, of whom he judged so uncharitably as to believe that all who were kind and generous, were destitute of common sense, and the selfish and unfeeling alone were wise.

"How poor Trevyllan would have enjoyed his two unworthy servants' having been caught in the meshes of the net which their own cupidity had wrought," said Mr. Vise; "this would have been deemed by him an illustration of his favorite theory, that most persons, and more especially servants, miss no opportunity of defrauding whenever they think they can do so with impunity."

The last solemn duties offered to the dead being over, I was on the point of returning to Oxford, leaving Mr. Vise to arrange the affairs connected with the bequest to me from Mr. Trevyllan, when a letter from Mrs. Scuddamore informed me, that owing to the weakness and imprudence of my late adversary, Mr. Mordaunt, the two duels had been made known, and the utmost commotion in the college had been the consequence. That foolish young man persisting in believing his wound to be a dangerous one, had, *malgré* the advice, nay the entreaties of his friend Percival and the seconds, sent for a surgeon, and revealed to him not only the wound, but the cause. The surgeon happened to be addicted to gossiping. He told it to some half-dozen friends, who repeated it to as many more; and the result was, that after a few days the heads of the college became acquainted with the affair, instituted strict inquiries into it—got at the whole truth—and, desirous to prevent for the future similar events, had decided on the expulsion of the duellists from college.

"You had better remain in London for the present," wrote Mrs. Scuddamore; "for, as it is known your absence has been caused by the death of your guardian, it will not tell against you. If the affair takes a more favorable turn, and that only rustication should be the punishment, you can come back to receive the sentence. The old fograms of a college take a very different view of such matters from what military men—and I almost consider myself one—do. You have behaved like a young man of spirit, and even should you be expelled college, your character will in no way be injured by it; so do not let your spirits be affected. Captain Brady, than whom a more honorable man nor a braver soldier does not exist, highly approves your conduct; and the approval of such a man may well console you for the censure of a few old pedagogues, ignorant of the ways of the world, and of the necessity of a young man maintaining a high reputation for moral and physical courage."

Not a word was said of her niece. She was not even included in a simple "we," which often implies so much. Mrs. Scuddamore had either intentionally omitted naming her niece, or had wholly forgotten her in the earnestness of her belief, that her opinion, and that of Captain Brady were all that interested me.

Mr. Vise advised me to place the ten thousand pounds bequeathed me by Mr. Trevyllan, in the funds; to dispose of the house, and invest the produce in the same security; and sell the extra plate, reserving as much as I might hereafter require for my own use, as also the pictures and library; the sale of all which would add considerably to my fortune.

This worthy man, with whom I had been acquainted ever since my first arrival from Wales, had always treated me with the greatest kindness; and on this occasion had manifested so warm an interest in my welfare, and taken so active a part in arranging my pecuniary concerns, that I could not doubt the sincerity of the friendship he professed. I made him acquainted with all that had occurred at Oxford; and he urged me so strenuously to return there, alleging that my protracted absence could not fail to prejudice my case, that I decided on adopting his advice; and after a fortnight's *séjour* in London, I returned to college. That fortnight's absence had been turned to account against me.

My first visit was to Mrs. Scuddamore, who received me with a cold civility that ill accorded with her former kindness, and with the cordiality of the letter I had received from her in London. I had heard the sound of retreating footsteps, and had caught a glimpse of white drapery, ere a door of the drawing-room, that opened on a back stairs, had closed, and I instantly concluded that Miss Melville had hastily withdrawn on my being announced. This struck me as an unfavorable omen, and a presentiment of evil glanced through my mind, which was not a little increased by the gravity of Mrs. Scuddamore's demeanor, and the formality of her manner. I ventured to inquire after the health of her niece, and was answered that she was perfectly well.

"May I not hope for the pleasure of seeing Miss Melville?" asked I, in considerable trepidation.

"To be candid with you, Mr. Herbert," replied the lady, "circumstances have occurred since your departure, which render it advisable that your visits here should be discontinued. My brother has accepted proposals for our niece, of so advantageous a nature, that anything which might interfere with the fulfilment of her engagements must be avoided. Your being on bad terms with the gentleman who is to be her husband, would naturally render your presence here disagreeable to him, and embarrassing to her; so you must excuse me for requesting that this may be your last visit here."

"May I inquire, Madam, whether anything injurious to my character has led to your adopting this line of conduct? If so, pray furnish me with an opportunity of justifying myself; for, it would be indeed very painful to me to lose your good opinion."

"My knowledge of you, Mr. Herbert, is so slight, that I had hardly formed an opinion, ex-

cept in the affair of the duel, when I certainly think you behaved perfectly well, and so I shall always say, whenever the subject is referred to in my presence; and now I will not detain you any longer, as I expect a person on business."

And Mrs. Scuddamore literally bowed me out of the room. My pride, my delicacy, and above all, my deep admiration of Miss Melville, made me revolt at this unexpected and unhandsome treatment. Wounded to the quick, I heartily wished that I could avenge my mortification on some one; but to whom could I turn? I determined to pay a visit to Captain Brady, and see if he, too, were changed, or, at least, whether I could not discover through him, what had led to the alteration in Mrs. Scuddamore. He received me in a friendly manner, informed me that the person to whom Miss Melville was to be married in a short time, was no other than Mr. Mordaunt, who, being his own master and possessed of a good fortune, had proposed for her hand, and her uncle had immediately accepted the proposal. "The young lady has no fortune," said he; "her aunt and uncle have nothing to leave her, and, as she had no objection to the gentleman, the match has been arranged."

"But is it quite certain that she has no objection?" demanded I, remembering the agitation and anxiety she had betrayed on the occasion of the misunderstanding between Percival, Mordaunt, and myself; and which, to confess the truth, I had attributed wholly to her interest for me.

"Yes, young gentleman; when referred to, she positively declared that she felt a preference for Mr. Mordaunt from her first interview with him, and that it was this preference which led to her alarm and anxiety on the occasion of the quarrel. I must acknowledge," added the old soldier, "that I did not expect that a fine young girl, and, moreover, the niece of Mrs. Scuddamore, would have accepted the hand of a man, who certainly in my opinion is very deficient in courage; but women are strange creatures, Mr. Herbert; and, although Mrs. Scuddamore is aware of the want of courage of Mr. Mordaunt, she overlooks it, for the sake of securing a provision for her orphan niece: which conduct on her part, has, I confess, much surprised and disappointed me."

Shocked and disgusted at the mercenary motives of the aunt, and the duplicity of the niece (for of duplicity I could not acquit her, although, perhaps, had I accused myself of vanity, instead of her of duplicity, I should be nearer the truth), I named them no more, but requested Captain Brady to inform me whether anything injurious to my honor had been said during my absence.

"Why, to be frank with you," replied he, "it has been whispered about, that you had been unpopular ever since you entered college; that at school you were likewise disliked and avoided, yet that you never evinced any symptom of surprise, or betrayed any desire to resent this general avoidance. It has been said, that it was not to resent any impertinence offered to Mrs. Scuddamore, but to avenge the long and repeated slights pointed at yourself, that you fought two duels; and this rumor has totally changed

favorable light in which the affair was previously viewed by impartial people. I can, however, give you no clue whatever, to fix this report on any particular person; and were you to charge any one with it, and so get into another duel, so far from serving yourself, you would inevitably injure your cause, and acquire the reputation of a revengeful and bad-hearted man. Be therefore advised by me, and let the matter drop, unless any offence be offered you."

### CHAPTER VIII.

No sooner was my return to Oxford notified, than I was informed that the duels in which I had been engaged, and which I had by my insulting conduct towards Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt provoked and forced them into, had been made the subject of a grave investigation; the result of which was, that it was decided, that I was to be severely reprimanded, and rusticated for a year.

It had not been taken into consideration that I was the challenged, and not the challenger; consequently, while my adversaries got off with a reprimand, my punishment was much more severe, and a sense of its injustice greatly irritated me, although I experienced but little regret at leaving college, and determined on returning to it no more. The independence secured to me by Mr. Trevyllan would have led to this decision, even had I not been rusticated, for I felt no inclination towards any of the learned professions, for which a long residence in college is necessary, and rather looked to the pleasures of a tranquil home in Wales, among my native hills, and with my favorite books, than to a continuance in the busy scenes of life, for which I had no predilection. I proceeded to arrange my affairs at Oxford, and before I left it, paid one more visit to Captain Brady. He received me kindly, was evidently somewhat shocked at the cavalier treatment I had met with at the hands of his friend Mrs. Scuddamore, although he attempted to mitigate it by pleading in excuse for it the dependent state of her fair niece, for whom she was anxious to secure a good marriage. Again I questioned him as to whether Miss Melville's own feelings were interested in the alliance now on the eve of being formed; and he assured me, that he knew for a certainty that the young lady had acknowledged to her aunt, that her happiness depended on it. Mrs. Scuddamore had, like me, imagined that the anxiety, betrayed by her niece, on the occasion of the scene between Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt, and myself, had originated in a partiality on her part, to me; and had questioned her closely on this subject, when she avowed that all her anxiety had been for Mr. Mordaunt, and that her appealing looks to me were meant to dissuade me from injuring him. Even when informed of the pusillanimity he had evinced on the ground, "and I thought," continued the brave Hibernian, "it was my duty to state the *fact*, so far from degrading him in her opinion,

it seemed positively to endear him to her more, and when he had solicited her hand, she confessed that his prudence, as she chose to term what I call by another name, would be the best guarantee for her future happiness, as it would deter him from duels. I confess," resumed Captain Brady, "that the young lady has considerably lowered herself in my estimation. The niece too of a lady with such elevated, and I may say, soldier-like opinions on the point of honor! Indeed, I believe I may venture to say, that Mrs. Scuddamore's own notions are wholly at variance with those of her niece on the subject; but money, my dear sir, and the prospect of a good settlement for that young person, have silenced her scruples. Her brother, too, is an advocate for the match; persons of his profession entertaining a widely different notion on honor and courage, to those of mine."

Being now convinced that my vanity had misled me, with regard to the imagined partiality of Miss Melville for my unworthy self, my sense of disappointment became considerably abated; so true it is that self-love is generally, if not always, the basis on which male attachments are founded. I could no longer respect a woman who could love a man wanting in courage; and even her beauty, which had so captivated me, faded away from my mind from the moment I had acquired the conviction that her preference was awarded to another.

I returned to London after three days' *séjour* in Oxford, fully determined to see Alma Mater no more, and with a heart as ready to be warmed by a new flame as if the recent one had never been kindled.

The morning after my arrival in town, I received a letter informing me that my mother had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill, and urging me to hasten to her with all possible speed. I set out for Wales within half an hour after the receipt of this letter, my filial tenderness excited into a more vigorous action by the dread of losing one to whom my heart turned with greater affection from its recent disappointment. At one moment I pictured her to myself insensible—perhaps dead—and all her past fondness arose up to awaken bitter self-reproach for having consented to so long a separation from her.

I had reached a village within about ten miles of my home, proceeding still with undiminished velocity, when the post-chaise broke down, and I received some severe contusions when thrown from it. My impatience at this delay almost maddened me; and when it was found that the carriage could not be repaired sufficiently to enable me to proceed in it for several hours, I determined to continue my route on horseback. To this project the obstinate postillion would not yield assent. His poor horses, he said, and swore, were already half dead, from the speed I had insisted on his using; and he would not allow me to ride one of them, were I even to pay him the value of both.

No horse could be had in the miserable little hamlet close to which this untoward accident occurred, and, half distracted, I determined to proceed on foot to my home, after having paid the sulky post-boy his extravagant demand for

the horses and repairs of the chaise. I could procure no guide to accompany me, so was compelled to set out alone, leaving my luggage in the village ale-house.

Never shall I forget that night! An unusual stillness prevailed—unbroken, save by the occasional bark of some cottager's dog, or the cry of some bird of night. Scarcely a breeze moved the leaves of the high trees, whose long shadows fell like giants across the road, in some parts of it so close as to exclude the light. I hurried on through this solitude, my own footsteps sounding so loud as to startle me, and the beating of my heart making itself audible. Sometimes a low sighing, or moaning of the heavy branches of the trees, moved by an occasional gust of wind rushing down through some deep ravine from the mountains, struck my ear with so sad a sound, that my superstitious forebodings connected it with a supernatural warning of the danger of my mother, and I would hurry on more rapidly than before, until breathless and exhausted, I was compelled to rest for a few minutes. These fitful gusts of the night wind, followed again by a long stillness, had something so inexpressibly solemn and imposing in them, that they made me shudder; and when some mountain torrent rushed down the precipitous path it had formed for itself, leaping wildly from crag to crag, and dashing its white foam around, I felt as if it were some mysterious agent instinct with power, from which I wished to escape, and again I hurried on until out of hearing of its deafening noise. Then, blaming my own unmanly weakness, I would turn back for a moment to behold the cataract rushing madly along, now hidden for a moment by the dark and funereal mountain pines, and the next instant, breaking into light its white masses, like huge avalanches of snow falling from some Alpine height into the valley beneath, with the sound of a mighty flood; and angry with myself for even the momentary delay, I would resume my rapid pace, while the fresh mountain air failed to cool my fevered brow, or burning lip.

At length the spire of the village church, near my home, became visible, its little vane shining brightly in the moonlight. Often, in the days of my childhood, had it guided my path home from the rambles I delighted in; and now, weary and fainting, I hailed it with an emotion that brought tears into my eyes. I trembled violently as I approached the house. I longed, yet I dreaded to pass its threshold—to know my fate. All my future happiness seemed to hang on the answer that awaited the question my tremulous lips refused to utter—"Have I still a mother?" A deathlike silence reigned around. The garden gate was unlatched, and I stealthily entered it, and passing through parterres of flowers that looked snowy white beneath the moon-beams, and whose fragrance filled the air, I approached the door, lifted the latch, hurried through the hall and into my mother's chamber. There, reclined on her bed, the curtains drawn aside, and four large waxen candles throwing their flickering light on her pallid face, I beheld the dead. One cry escaped my agonized breast, and I fell to the ground as if bereft of life.

## CHAPTER IX.

WHEN I recovered consciousness, I found myself laid on a bed to which I had been removed while insensible, the old and faithful attendant of my mother watching over me. The sight of her melted my heart, so associated was she with the days of my childhood, and with that dear mother no longer a denizen of earth. I wept long and uninterrupted, for the good Mrs. Burnet sought not to check my tears. Indeed her own fell fast, for fondly devoted to her deceased mistress, her grief at losing her was profound. She related to me every particular of the sudden and fatal illness that had snatched my mother from life. A brain fever, originating in a neglected cold, in four days, had left me an orphan.

"Oh! sir," said Mrs. Burnet, "how often did my dear departed mistress demand you in her delirium—how frequently press her pillow in her arms, and bless it, believing she held you. Never was there so doting a mother, yet how unselfish was her love! 'I would give worlds to have my son with me, my good Burnet,' has she often said, 'but my grief, which has now become a part of myself, would depress his spirits, and destroy that elasticity of mind, and that cheerfulness which appertain to the season of youth, and that I could not bear to witness. When he comes, and oh! how I long for that hour, I must put a constraint on my feelings, and conceal my grief for the dead, for the sake of the living.'"

And this was the mother I had so blamably acquiesced in remaining absent from, while she, longing to behold me, had sacrificed her own wishes in her desire that my cheerfulness should not receive even a temporary check. "Oh! what in this cold and busy world, can be compared to a mother's heart, unless it be that fabled bird that is said to open its breast to feed its young from the spring that supports its own life, which it readily yields for the preservation of its offspring!"

Mrs. Burnet forced me to take some sustenance, making my admission to the chamber of death the condition of my yielding to her wishes on this point, and my sleeping a few hours before I visited it. She administered a narcotic, and, under its soothing influence, I dropt into slumber, from which I awoke not until the next morning. How painful is the first awakening from sleep after a heavy affliction! How bewildering—how confused the sensations! Yet, even while bewildered, the sense of sorrow pervades the heart, and one dreads to turn to memory for a full explanation of its cause. But soon, alas! the terrible truth reveals itself, and as the veil that shades the senses is withdrawn, agony succeeds it. A burst of grief quickly followed my awaking, and brought Mrs. Burnet to my pillow. How the room, and every object it contained, recalled past and happier times to my mind, awaking countless tender memories!

"Ah! Sir," said the worthy woman, following my eyes, as they glanced around, "it does seem hard to see inanimate things all in their places unchanged, and fresh as when left years before.

and—but no! we must not talk of this now. You have painful duties to perform, and I must not unman you.”

I arose, and when dressed, went to my mother's room—that room which I had been wont to dread in former times, and the entrance to which I used to consider as a penance. How my heart smote me, as the recollection crossed my mind. A cambric handkerchief veiled the face of my mother, and for a few minutes I had not courage to remove it. When at length, and with a trembling hand I drew it aside, I was seized with an awe that checked my strong desire to embrace that pallid, but still beautiful face, so like, yet so different from what I had anticipated. It looked many years younger than when I had last seen her. Death seemed to have restored youth to those marble lineaments, to that lofty brow, and those finely modelled cheeks. For the first time I became aware of how wonderfully beautiful she must have been, and my regret increased for her loss. There was something inexpressibly tender in that delicate face, which, joined to the calm and holy character which pervaded it, flooded my eyes with tears. The hands were crossed on the breast as in prayer, and their exquisite form and proportion might have led one to suppose they were of Parian marble, fresh from the chisel of some great sculptor, had not a pale lilac tint around the tips of the fingers and nails, betrayed their mortality. And there lay the only being, beside my father, who had ever loved me. There, cold, and in her marble slumber, lay the fond mother; who but a few fleeting hours before had, even in the delirium of fever, demanded me with all the longing impatience of a doting heart. She who would have welcomed my coming with her latest accents, was now unconscious of my presence—of my grief. My sighs and sobs moved not the dull ear of death; my burning tears fell unheeded by her, whose hand would in life have wiped them fondly away; and I stood alone in a world, whose coldness and selfishness I had already learned by sad experience to estimate. A portrait of my father was placed on the wall that fronted the foot of my mother's bed. It had occupied that place ever since his death, that she might behold it on the first moment of awaking, and the last before she resigned herself to sleep. The eyes of the picture seemed to contemplate the pale face the original had loved so well, with a grave, if not sorrowful expression—that face which, until the last few hours, had ever been turned towards it with such tender sadness. Alas! the painted canvas was not more sensible than the recumbent image before me. Both seemed but as a mockery to my bursting heart, which yearned to clasp in life, if but even for a moment, that beloved mother, and to tell her all that was passing in my agonized breast. Her bible and prayerbook were on a table by her bedside; several silken strings marked pages in the former, and proved how habitually it had been resorted to. Her *prie-Dieu* stood near, and on it was inscribed in Spanish, a motto, which I remembered she had placed soon after the death of my father. “A day nearer to thee,” was the translation, and referred to each day, bringing her nearer to the dead. How warm, how loving

had that heart been, that had so lately ceased to beat for ever! How fondly and faithfully had it cherished, and remained true to the memory of him who had been its sole love—its idol; and now, it was but as the clod of the valley. It could never more throb with sorrow—never beat with joy, to behold the child of *him* she was gone to join in another world. The violence of my grief became subdued, as I contemplated that pale face. Its heavenly expression seemed to chide my selfish sorrow, while it offered a pledge that she, who could never know happiness on earth, was now blest in heaven.

The next day I opened the *escritoire* of my mother, and in it I found a letter addressed to me, as if anticipating that we should not meet again. Her maternal feelings were poured out with a lavish fondness in this last letter. She entreated me, that if it was decreed she should be taken from me, not to mourn for her, for that while on earth a sorrow she could not conquer must always poison her existence. She blamed herself for not having fought against it, while yet she had youth and health to aid her in the effort, and for not having devoted the whole of those years given up to a selfish grief to the fulfilment of her duties as a mother. But even in this letter, and while accusing herself, her passionate love for my father broke forth, for she added to this acknowledgment of error, that she believed no woman who had been loved by a being so noble, so virtuous, so good, so superior to all other men, could ever have been consoled for his loss. She told me that she had for some years paid a pension to her old and esteemed friend, Mrs. Maitland, whose husband had left that amiable lady and her daughters so ill provided for, that, without the assistance she had afforded, they would be unable to enjoy the comforts of life, and she entreated me to continue to pay them that sum as if it were a bequest from her, in order that Mrs. Maitland's delicacy should not be wounded. She added, that one of the wishes nearest to her heart was that I might love and marry one of the daughters of her friend. She would not urge me to act in this matter contrary to my own inclinations, but if it pleased Providence that either of these amiable girls should win my heart, our marriage would have her maternal benediction bestowed in anticipation of the event. There was a solemnity in this last passage which made a deep impression on me. I determined to continue the pension she had allowed, nay more, to settle it beyond my own power of revocation on the mother, without ever letting her know it had not been arranged by my mother, who had, in fact, no power to alienate any part of my property.

I questioned Mrs. Burnet about the family, and her answers convinced me that they merited all my mother had done for them.

“The young ladies are beautiful, Sir,” said that worthy woman, “and as good as they are handsome. They have but one defect, if indeed the peculiarity to which I refer may be so called, and that may easily be accounted for by their having been brought up in such total solitude in this wild and lovely neighborhood. They are as shy as uncaged birds, and, like them, fly off at the approach of a stranger. My blessed mis-

tress, who loved them as if they had been her own children, often endeavored to reason them out of this extreme shyness; but I suppose it is constitutional, for she never succeeded in conquering it."

"Mrs. Maitland," continued Mrs. Burnet, "never left your dear mother's bedside from the moment she learned her illness until all was over. She said she would come and see you, Sir, as soon as her presence might not be deemed intrusive, for she, too, is a very shy lady. Indeed her daughters, my dear mistress used to say, inherited this peculiarity from her."

The last mournful duties were now to be paid to the dead. How many painful and heart-rending details do they involve! The placing the dead in the coffin, the closing of the lid that shuts for ever from our sight the object which, while we can still gaze on it, does not seem to have wholly left us, and the dark pall covering the coffin, each, and all, of these details bring their own separate agonies, the pangs of which can only be known by those who have experienced them.

Mrs. Maitland and her daughters came to take their last farewell of their departed friend before her remains were concealed for ever. I had not courage to see them, so wholly were my nerves unstrung, so retired to my own chamber while they remained; and when, two days after, I followed my beloved mother to the grave as chief mourner, so wholly engrossed was I by the intense grief to which my heart was a prey, that I did not recognise in the veiled and weeping persons who attended the solemn ceremony a single face I knew.

Who can paint the agony of seeing the coffin of one fondly loved lowered into the vault—of hearing the earth thrown on the coffin lid—of seeing the large flag replaced over the aperture, and of returning to the now desolate home so lately occupied by the dear departed! In all this agony, there was something soothing in the knowledge of how general was the sympathy in my grief, for my dear mother was beloved and lamented by the whole neighborhood. She had received every care, every attention, from the friends she most esteemed, all the devout and touching rites of the Church had prepared her for the last change, and had been offered over her grave,—there was much to be thankful for in this; and so eagerly does the human heart, while yet youth is left, turn for consolation in its first heavy sorrow to any source whence it can be found, that mine dwelt with a pleasure, melancholy though it was, on these points. The clergyman walked with me from the church to my home. He pressed me cordially to take up my abode in his house for the present, and I had some difficulty in declining his reiterated offers, or rather requests; to be allowed to spend the rest of the day with me. Would to heaven that I had not declined them! for how would this simple circumstance have changed my destiny—from what years of agony would it not have saved me!

When I entered my desolate home, I stole to my mother's chamber. Its deserted air, its silence and solitude, were congenial to my feelings; and having locked the door to prevent the

intrusion of the worthy Mrs. Burnet, I flung myself on the bed so lately pressed by her I had but two hours before seen laid in the dark and dreary vault by the side of my father, and yielding to grief, I wept with uncontrollable emotion, until tired nature sought relief in a sleep more resembling the stupor of disease than the refreshing slumber of health. I awoke not until the sun was going down, and a mild and beautiful evening had replaced the glorious day. My head ached, my pulse throbbed with fever, and a burning heat parched my throat. I felt as if I could not breathe within the doors, as an unfortunate bird might feel in an exhausted receiver, and dreading the officious kindness of Mrs. Burnet, while suffering under my present state of mental and physical irritation, I determined to go forth into the open air.

I opened the window, stepped from it into a portion of the garden inclosed from the rest, by a high hedge of laurestinus, and open only to the glass-door and windows of my mother's room, and a small gate that led into a grove close by. This portion of the garden had been divided from the rest to secure the privacy its owner loved. Here would she sit for hours, reading, or would sometimes ramble into the shady grove, always keeping in her own possession the key of the gate.

By going out through this little gate, I should avoid meeting Mrs. Burnet, or any of the servants; indeed, no part of the house commanded a view of it. How vividly does every circumstance of that evening dwell in my mind! I remember the perfume that stole on my olfactory nerves as I stepped into the garden filled with flowers—I remember the deep stillness of the air, the crimson and golden glories of the curtain, beneath which the sun was hiding his last beams, and the feverish excitement of my feelings. My hand trembles so violently that it can scarcely hold the pen, for I am now, my dearest child, coming to the narrative of the dread event that has blighted all my prospects, and steeped my life in inextricable wretchedness.

## CHAPTER X.

I passed the gate, entered the grove, and walked through a shaded lane leading to a wild and romantic spot, well remembered since my boyish days. This spot was situated on the brow of a steep and precipitous rock, at the bottom of which a rapid stream rushed wildly on amidst fragments of rocks and little islands covered with verdure, that bent into its glittering breast. On the left lay a wood that formed a beautiful background, leaving only a space of ground sufficiently wide for two persons to walk, between it and the rocky precipice to the right.

Often had I gone in search of birds' nests in this wood in my childhood, and descended among the clefts of the rock to the verge of the stream. In some of these clefts inaccessible to other visitors, from the danger of the steep and slippery descent, I had been wont to enter in the sultry days of summer, pleased to find so cool a retreat.



and proud of having accomplished a feat of no little danger, as also in having discovered hiding-places unknown to all beside.

As I advanced along this path I noticed a small rustic alcove, erected during my absence, and remembered that my dear mother had written to me to say she had it raised as a resting-place for her friend, Mrs. Maitland and her daughters, in their daily visits to her, the spot being half-way between the two abodes. This led my mind to a new train of thought. I recollected the desire expressed by my departed parent that I should wed one of the daughters of her friend. I remembered that Mrs. Burnet had praised the great beauty of both, and with the heart yearning for some one to love, which had haunted me for years, my pulse beat quicker, as I pictured to myself, that in one of these young beauties I might find the long-desired object to satisfy all its cravings.

I approached the rustic alcove, and as I reached its entrance, I saw that it was occupied. I stood speechless from emotion, unable to offer an excuse for my involuntary intrusion, but the person to whom it should have been addressed, spoke not, moved not—and seemed wholly unconscious of my presence. A girl, young, and oh! how exquisitely beautiful, was before me. She reclined on a wooden bench, her arm resting on a table, and supporting her fair cheek, over which her rich brown tresses fell in luxuriant profusion. I approached nearer on tiptoe, and so softly that I could not hear my own steps; and now I discovered that the lovely being was asleep. How calm, how sweet was the expression of her face! The rosy lips were slightly parted, revealing teeth like orient pearls; the long dark silken eyelashes shaded her cheeks, just arriving where the delicate rose-color tinged them; and her full and rounded bust by its gentle but regular undulations, denoted that she slumbered. Never had I beheld aught so lovely. Transfixed, and almost breathless, I continued to gaze on her. I was tempted to doubt the reality of her presence, and to accuse my senses of having deceived me. I rubbed my eyes like one awaking from a dream, but still there she reclined in all the helplessness of repose, with all the innocence and beauty we attribute to a slumbering seraph.

It flashed through my brain that the fair sleeper must be one of the daughters of my mother's friend—perhaps the one designed by her to be my wife, and oh! what a tumult of rapture thrilled through my heart at the thought, that the wondrous charms before me might one day become mine. I forgot my grief, deep and sincere as it had been. How could it exist while I gazed on the exquisite beauty, so softly slumbering near me, whose sweet breath passing through her half-opened lips, came to me as the odor from some balmy and fragrant flower!

Intoxicated with delight, I could no longer resist the uncontrollable impulse to press my lips on that snowy forehead—but I would press them so lightly, as not to awaken the sleeper, and heaven is my witness, that excited as I was, no thought that could have wounded her purity presented itself to my mind. No, I would retire, after having kissed that beautiful

brow, and concealed behind the rustic alcove, watch over her safety, and prevent her repose being intruded on. I approached close to her, trembling with emotion,—her sweet breath fanned my cheek, and tempted me almost beyond my power of resistance to press the crimson portal whence it passed; but there was something so pure, so innocent, in the beauteous face, that I dared not profane her lips,—these could I only hope to touch with mine when they should have pronounced her consent to become my wife. So gently bending down, I lightly printed a kiss on her fair forehead. No sooner had I done so than she started up, opened her eyes wildly, uttered a cry, and rushed from the alcove. I called to her, told my name, implored her not to fly from me, and entreated her pardon; but all was in vain, she heeded me not, but quickening her speed, ran madly along. The whole consequences of the effect certain to be produced on her mind, and on that of her mother, when, terrified and exhausted, she should reach her home, flashed on my mind. I should be viewed by both with indignation and disgust, as a hardened libertine, who, on the very evening of the day that had seen my dear mother consigned to the grave,—when sorrow alone should fill my heart, had stolen upon the privacy of the daughter of her friend, and dared to seek to take advantage of her slumber. Yes, I should be driven with abhorrence from their door; I should lose for ever this lovely being, for no explanation could justify me, or make them believe the innocence of my intentions.

These reflections passed through my brain with the velocity with which the past life is said to pass through the mind of the drowning wretch, and, maddened by the dread of losing her, I flew, rather than ran, in the direction she had taken. I gained rapidly on her steps, and she, I suppose, still more terrified at hearing mine, increased her speed, keeping near the edge of the precipice. I could almost have seized her garment, so close had I got, when her foot slipped, and oh! horror of horrors, she rolled over the declivity, and in a moment was lost to my sight.

Oh God! never will the terror, the despair of that moment, be effaced from my memory! Even now, as I trace these lines, my hand trembles, my brain grows giddy at the recollection. With the rapidity of lightning, and careless of life, I rushed down one of the wild paths, never, perhaps, trodden save by the feet of goats, and my own, but remembered since childhood. I jumped from crag to crag, where one false step would have cast me into the yawning abyss beneath, until I reached the narrow band of sand which separated the base of the rock from the river. There she lay, part of her person immersed in the water. I raised her in my arms, and found she had not ceased to breathe. Oh! Almighty God, how fervent was the thanksgiving I offered up that moment to thy throne, that she still lived! I placed her on the sand-bank, bathed her temples with water from the stream, and knelt down beside her to feel if her heart still beat. A few feeble pulsations proved that life was not extinct, and hope once more broke on my mind in spite of reason.

I prayed, I wept, I raved aloud—my eyes fixed on that angelic face—but in a few minutes a slight shudder passed over it, the lips opened, gasped, and breathing a deep sigh, her soul passed away.

Never, never, can the agony of that moment be effaced from my mind. To think that ten minutes, ten short minutes before, and she was alive, in health, and with the promise of many years of existence—and now, there she lay, a lifeless, mutilated corse! And I—I was the cause of all this. I considered myself as much her murderer as if my hand had hurled her down the precipice: for had not my folly in daring to shock and terrify her, led to the frightful catastrophe that had occurred? I called down imprecations on my own head, I wept, I tore my hair, flung myself by her side, and embraced her lifeless form. What was I to do? Ought I not at once to go and denounce my crime, and offer myself up to justice? Then came the deep, the inherent sense of shame. Who would believe that I had not more criminal intentions than those which God alone knew filled my heart, when I kissed her brow? How terrible, how ignominious would be the suspicions to which my self-denunciation must give rise—suspicions which I had no means of refuting, except my simple asseverations of the whole truth, asseverations which I felt assured no one would credit. No, I dared not avow the fact—I must conceal it for ever—for ever bear the dreadful secret pent up in my own breast—never more to hope for sympathy in the misery which must henceforth cloud my days. There were moments, when, turning my eyes from the still beautiful face of the departed, to the rapid river that almost laved my feet, I was tempted to lift the corpse in my arms, and to plunge with it into its bosom; but an unseen hand—the hand of the Almighty, held me back, and I determined not to rush uncalled into the dread presence of my Creator.

Then the thought of consigning the corpse to the river occurred to me. I reasoned that if found it would be supposed that she had accidentally fallen over the cliff into the water, and had been carried away by the current. This would be the safest of all methods not only of getting rid of the corpse, but of accounting for her death; and the fearful catastrophe which had taken place had so wholly sobered me, that I was fully capable of judging it to be so. But when I gazed on the beautiful face—the exquisite form of the dead—I shrank back with terror from the thought of exposing it to be injured by fishes, or, more horrible, to be devoured by water-rats, with which the river abounded. At length the recollection of one of the deep clefts in the rocks flashed on my mind. Yes, I would bear her there to take her everlasting rest, never more to be seen by mortal eye save mine. I lifted her in my arms, and tottering beneath the weight of my precious burden, I bore her in the direction of the well-remembered opening. The moon had risen, so I was enabled to find the place, which was not far distant; and laying the corpse close to its entrance, I first crept in on my hands and knees, and then drew it after me by the shoulders, as gently as if I moved a sleep-

ing child, trembling lest I should injure it. Having drawn it to the innermost part of the cavern, I composed the limbs with as scrupulous a delicacy as if the departed had been my sister or my daughter. I covered it over as carefully, with the shawl tied around her slender waist, as if the night air could chill that lifeless form; and I placed small fragments of the rock that had from time to time fallen in, on the edge of the shawl, to prevent any reptiles that the cavern might contain, from touching her. Many a tear flowed down my cheeks while I performed this sad, sad duty, and reflected on how rude a bed now reclined that lovely form, which had hitherto been watched over by a mother's love.

I left the cavern, and with rapid but stealthy steps, keeping always in the shadow of trees or rocks, reached the little gate so lately passed, crossed the garden, and creeping close to the continuous high screen of laurestinus, pushed open the lattice, and entered the chamber as noiselessly as a midnight robber. I carefully examined my clothes and boots by the light of the lamp which I had left burning in the chimney. I removed every fragment of clay and sand that had adhered to them, and collecting these last, consigned them to one of the most distant beds of the garden, there to mingle with the earth. I brushed my clothes until no trace of soil remained, and then believed my task accomplished; when examining my hands, I discovered that they were stained with blood! Her blood! The murderer who for the first time has dyed his hands with human gore, and discovers it when a witness may in a moment detect this proof of his crime, never experienced more horror and terror than I did, when I gazed on my ensanguined fingers. Shuddering I removed the stains, emptied the water into the garden, carefully closed the lattice, unlocked the door of the chamber, flung myself on my bed, and rang my bell. Mrs. Burnet soon answered the summons.

"O, Sir," observed she, "I was never before so rejoiced to hear the sound of a bell, for I was most fearful that you were very unwell. I have been to your door frequently, but would not open it, lest I might awake you." (She could not open it, as it was locked inside, but I was glad to find *she* did *not* know this circumstance.)

"I have been asleep," said I, "but my head aches sadly. Let me have a little weak wine and water."

"I am afraid, sir, you are more ill than you think," observed the worthy woman, "for your voice sounds so husky, and, altogether, you look so unlike yourself; but it's not to be wondered at, after all you have gone through this day."

When Mrs. Burnet brought me the wine and water I detained her in my chamber, for I dreaded being alone, and it also occurred to me that her presence there on this eventful night might, should suspicion of the tragedy which had occurred ever be pointed towards me, be received as a proof of my innocence. I loathed myself for this base and selfish cunning, even while obeying its dictates to preserve a life that must henceforth be one of wretchedness. I talked to her of my mother, drew from her da-

tails of her mode of passing her time, but I shuddered when I found all of these details were mixed up with particulars of her friend Mrs. Maitland and her daughters.

"Never, sir, was there a more charming family. The mother so kind, so considerate. She loved my dear mistress as a sister, nursed her and watched over her health and comfort so tenderly and unceasingly. There never was so devoted a mother. Her life is bound up in her children, and, I must say, they well deserve all her fondness. Miss Maitland is the most lovely, amiable young creature alive. So sweet tempered, so gentle, so charitable! Often has your dear blessed mother said to me, 'Ah! Burnet, how happy I should be if my son were to marry Miss Maitland. I am sure he can't help loving her the moment he sees her, she is so beautiful and engaging.'"

How tumultuously my agonized heart beat as I listened to Burnet repeating my departed mother's words, and remembered that the creature she spoke of was now numbered with the dead, her bones remaining concealed in a rude cavern where I had placed them!

"I'm sure," resumed Mrs. Burnet, "that I can't tell which of the two young ladies my dear mistress loved the best. She often said she did not know, *both* were so dear to her. Miss Louisa is as handsome as her sister, and as amiable also, and more yielding-like, than Miss Maitland. My mistress used to call them her 'gazelles'; they were so shy, flying away from the sight of a stranger like those pretty animals."

And I, who had learned this peculiarity in both the sisters, had, like a maniac, provoked it into action,—had terrified, and caused the death of *her* my mother had destined to be my wife,—and was now compelled to assume an air of indifference, while listening to the praises of my victim! Well had my dear mother judged, that I could not resist loving Miss Maitland as soon as I had seen her! Who could resist loving such a creature? How I shuddered when I reflected what must be the alarm of the fond mother and sister when they found the dear absent girl returned not to her home,—an alarm to be followed by the agony of prolonged fear and suspense, when no tidings of her could be gained! How my heart bled for them!—and oh, how I execrated myself as the cause of their affliction!

While Burnet was resuming her praises of the young ladies, a loud knocking came to the hall door. I half started from my bed, and terror filled my breast. Had my guilt been discovered by some unseen spectator, who had marked my pursuit of the flying and terrified girl, and had seen the terrible catastrophe? Was the first thought that flashed on my mind. Had the officers of justice come in search of me? was the second; and I trembled so violently that, had not Mrs. Burnet quickly left the room, my evident terror must have awakened her curiosity, if not her suspicions. I ran to the door of the chamber, which opened into the hall, and heard her demand "who knocked?"

"It is I, Mrs. Burnet," answered a man's voice. "Is Miss Maitland here?"

"Here?" reiterated Burnet; "what should

bring her here at this hour?" And she unlocked the door, and a man entered.

"Then our last hope is gone!" exclaimed the man; and I heard him fling himself into a chair.

"Good God, what has occurred?" demanded Mrs. Burnet, now greatly excited.

"Miss Maitland left home this evening to take a walk, did not return at her usual hour, and night coming on, and my mistress getting alarmed, she sent me off in search of her. I have been in every direction, but cannot find her. John Jones's boy said he saw her walking towards the half-way seat, and there, sure enough, I found her pocket-handkerchief, which showed the poor dear young lady had been a-crying, for it was wet with her tears. Indeed, for that matter, all the three ladies have done nothing but cry ever since the death of Mrs. Herbert."

How my heart smote me!

"Good God, Ap Owen, this is very alarming!" said Mrs. Burnet.

"I've been to the churchyard," resumed Ap Owen; "for it struck me, that, mayhap Miss had gone there to see the spot where her kind friend was laid,—for you know, Mrs. Burnet, she doted on Mrs. Herbert,—but there was no sign of her there, so I returned home, thinking that she might have got back, but woe's me, she had never been near her home, and so I came off here!"

"My master has been very poorly, and in bed, ever since he came from the funeral," said Mrs. Burnet; "but I'll go and tell him this heavy news; and I'm sure he'll get up at once and join in the search for Miss Maitland."

I had barely time to rush into my bed, and assume as calm an air as I could command, when Mrs. Burnet hurried into my chamber to tell me the news. "I will get up at once," said I, "and join the search."

"Ah, I knew you would!" observed she. "God grant you may discover where the dear young lady is, and restore her safely to her poor distracted mother and sister!"

I dismissed the good woman, and, while I hurried on my clothes, I could hear her telling Ap Owen "how good it was of me, so ill as I had been all the evening, to leave my sick-bed and expose myself to the night air—but it was just like me—I had all the kindness of my dear mother, and never considered self."

"Good heavens," thought I, "if she but knew the truth, how would she shun and hate me!" What a hypocrite—what a wretch have I become! How am I to meet the unhappy mother, and sister, whose grief I have caused? How bear to hear them speak of the angel whose evil destiny it was that I should cross her path! I felt my spirits quail before the honest servitor Ap Owen, when I joined him in the hall, and was glad that Mrs. Burnet had accounted for my agitation by having told him of my illness.

## CHAPTER XI.

"In what direction had we best proceed?" said I to Ap Owen. "Do your suspicions point to any particular spot?"

"In truth no, Sir. We have no bad people about this place. We are so far from any high road, that no strangers come here; and the neighborhood is so honest, that I can't suspect any one: indeed, for the matter of that, my mistress and the young ladies are so beloved, that there is not a man, woman, or child in the whole parish that would harm them. What I fear is, that Miss Maitland may have missed the path in the dark, and fallen over the rock into the water. God grant I may be wrong in this surmise; but I don't know how otherwise to account for her disappearance."

This natural suspicion on the part of Ap Owen quieted, in some measure, my selfish alarm; but then came the dread that the river would be drawn, and when no corpse was discovered, suspicion must point elsewhere.

"I think, Sir, it will be well for us to go first to the cottage. She may have returned since I left it."

I trembled at the thought of confronting the mother and sister of my victim. How could I sustain their glances? Would not my countenance reveal to them that I was, if not guilty of her death, cognisant of the fact? Well has it been said, that "a guilty conscience needs no accuser;" and deeply did I feel the truth of the axiom, for I fancied that every eye might detect in my face the fearful secret that pressed like a mountain of lead on my breast. I dared not offer any excuse for a non-compliance with Ap Owen's proposition, lest it might lead to suspicion; so I roused my courage to its utmost extent, and accompanied him to the residence of Mrs. Maitland. As we approached the cottage, I was struck with its beautiful and romantic aspect. What a contrast did it offer to the feelings of its occupants, and my own! Embosomed in trees, and surrounded by a garden filled with odoriferous plants and flowers, it looked the picture of peace; and except that lights flashed from the windows, one might have supposed that its inhabitants had long sunk into repose. No sooner, however, had Ap Owen opened the garden gate, than the bereaved mother and daughter rushed forth; the former exclaiming, "my child! my child!" while the latter pronounced the word "sister," in accents so full of hope, that my heart sickened at the thought of how soon that hope must be destroyed.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" said the distracted mother, grasping the arm of Ap Owen, "do you bring me no tidings of my child! Does she live? Oh! say but that she is still alive, and I will bear all else, and will bless you."

I could not, had my life depended on the effort, have spoken to Mrs. Maitland at that moment. I felt ready to throw myself at her feet and avow the truth, so deep was the emotion her maternal agony had produced in my breast.

"I wish, ma'am, I could give you any news," replied Ap Owen, in trembling accents. "This gentleman is Mr. Herbert, who left his sick bed to come and help me in the search, and ill

enough he is, God knows, for he has had many fits of trembling since we left his house, and see now how he shakes."

I made a desperate effort to recover self-composure, and approached Mrs. Maitland.

"Ah! I ought to have guessed who you were," said she, "for you resemble my friend; but my brain is so tortured, that I remember nothing but my child—the dearest, sweetest, but——"

Here a violent paroxysm of tears impeded her utterance, and she fell, half fainting, into the arms of her daughter. In a few minutes she revived, and though still tottering from weakness, she approached me and grasped my arm.

"We lose time!" exclaimed she. "Every moment is precious; let us set out in different directions in search of my child. Let us call her name aloud. She may have over-fatigued herself and fallen asleep in some sequestered spot. She has told me that this has occurred to her more than once in her long rambles."

O! how quick my heart beat at this truthful guess.

"Yes! it must be so," resumed the distracted mother, her death-like face lighting up with excitement at this new hope. Hitherto I had not looked at the daughter. Indeed I avoided it from two motives: the first, that of dreading to increase the agitation I already felt; and the second, a fear of exposing it to her. But at this moment, a dark cloud, which had for some time obscured the moon's disk, floated away, leaving that glorious luminary revealed in all its splendor, and involuntarily my eyes turned on the young lady, whose pale face was illumined by its silvery light. So striking was her resemblance to her sister, that I started violently, and uttered a cry, before my reason could check the sudden impulse. Then recollecting myself, I pressed my hand to my side, and in answer to the inquiries from Mrs. Maitland, feigned a sudden spasm at my heart, to which I asserted I had lately been subject. Alas! there was a greater, a more lasting agony in that heart, than ever physical suffering inflicted.

"I am sorry to be compelled to allow you to stay in the night air, when you ought to be in your bed," said Mrs. Maitland; "but such is my intense anxiety about my child, that I have not courage enough to dispense with your aid in the search of her."

I hurried from the presence of the distracted mother and daughter, and with Ap Owen, again renewed the unavailing pursuit.

"Somehow, Sir," said he, "the notion that the poor dear young lady has tumbled down one of the precipices, grows stronger and stronger in my mind. It's difficult, and very dangerous too, to descend, the rocks are so slippery; and besides, though gentlemen like you may laugh at such superstitions, poor men like me can't quite get the better of 'em. It has been said for years and years, that among the steep rocks there are caverns from which unearthly sounds have been heard to proceed, and that those who attempted to explore them, soon came to a violent end. So general is the belief entertained in these parts of the truth of these stories, that I don't think there is a man in the whole neighborhood who would descend, however great the reward offered."

What weight seemed lifted from my heart at this intelligence! for ever since he had expressed his belief that Miss Maitland had fallen down the precipice, I concluded that a careful search would inevitably be made, and that her remains would be discovered.

How did I regret having removed them from the spot where the corpse had dropped, and where, if found, the belief that she had accidentally fallen over the cliff would be universally received. Less terrible would be the grief of the bereaved mother and sister, when the fact of the death of her so dear to them was actually proved, than to have to bear for ever the agonies of suspense. I was half tempted to steal to the cavern the moment I could free myself from Ap Owen, and to remove the corpse to the spot where I had found it.

"You, Sir, I suppose, don't believe in ghosts or fairies," resumed my companion, "but I assure you, that among the poor people about here, there is not a single person who doubts that there are such things. Yes, Sir, and warnings too. Why, it was only last night that a raven kept flapping his wings near the bed-room windows of the young ladies, and uttered such wild cries as awoke my mistress, who told my sister, who has lived with her ever since she came to Wales. My sister was quite frightened when she heard of it, for we all look on a raven crying near a house as a sign of the death of one of the inhabitants. She told it to me this morning, after she had dressed her mistress. 'I'm afraid,' said she, 'it will be the old lady, for she grieves so for the loss of her friend, Mrs. Herbert, that she'll make herself ill.' Who'd have thought it could be one of the young ladies? so healthy, so active, so likely to live for years and years. And now I think of it, would you believe it, Sir, that no later than last night, my sister showed me a winding-sheet on the candle, as plain a one as ever I saw in my life, with all the fine narrow plaits running down it, and turning over: yes, Sir, no later than last night: and who ever saw a winding-sheet on a candle without hearing of a death soon after?"

Such were the topics on which the superstitious Ap Owen spoke, while we explored every leafy nook, every moss-covered stone, or rustic seat, where she, for whom our vain search was making, could be supposed to stop to rest. I frequently proposed that we should separate, and continue our search in different directions; but so strongly had his mind been infected by his own superstitious tales, that Ap Owen, dreading to be left alone, started at every breeze that moved the branches of the surrounding trees, and trembled at the sight of any object on which the moon-beams fell more strongly.

We abandoned not our search until day broke in the east, when, worn down by fatigue and mental anguish, I returned home, to fling myself on my bed. I fell into a slumber from exhaustion; but the fearful event of the previous evening haunted me in my sleep. Again I stood in the rustic alcove, gazing on the lovely slumberer: again I stole on tip-toe to press my lips to her forehead, and once more I beheld her start from her repose in terror, and wildly rush from the spot. *In vain I tried to overtake her, and avert*

the doom that with an almost supernatural prescience, I foresaw awaited her, but my feet seemed to be of lead, I could not move, although I saw her with unsteady steps approach the giddy height, stumble, and then fall into the abyss beneath. I uttered so wild a cry, that Mrs. Burnet hurried into the chamber, and found me with drops of cold perspiration rolling from my brow, my frame trembling violently, and my mind wandering. These symptoms were the precursors of a brain fever. For several days my life was despaired of, and I was unconscious of all that was passing around me; but the one fixed and terrible scene was repeated in my dreams, never failing to produce the most violent emotions, until the fever, yielding to the skillful treatment of the doctor, summoned from the next town, left me, reduced to a state of such extreme weakness, that, helpless as an infant, I seemed to hover between life and death.

It was during these days of physical exhaustion that a reprieve from agony was granted to my mind. I scarcely could recall the circumstances of the event that had led to my illness. All was vague and dreamy in my memory, and I resigned myself to this half-oblivious state, which afforded a temporary relief to the mental pangs I had been previously suffering, as a worn-out patient yields himself to the torpor produced by opiates administered to dull the sense of pain. Female forms glided with noiseless steps around my couch, but I experienced no curiosity to know who they were. I took the medicines or sustenance held to my lips, without examining who offered them, or uttering a word of thanks, and sank back on my pillow again in all the supineness peculiar to persons reduced by long illness to extreme weakness, careless of and ungrateful for the trouble I had given.—But this state of torpid existence was too much happiness for me long to enjoy. With returning strength came back memory, like a giant refreshed by slumber, and armed to wound. My recollections became clear and distinct, and misery was the result. Yet I did not abandon myself to the vain regret and corroding self-reproach that were preying on my mind, without many an effort to subdue them. Human beings are ever prone to pluck from their hearts the poisoned arrow of remorse that has pierced them, and seek to heal the wound by applying the salve of oblivion. How many excuses did I make for the share I had borne in the late terrible catastrophe! How much sophistry did I expend in the endeavor to prove myself guiltless!

I would mentally argue, "Was it my fault that the lovely creature, now no more, had rushed upon death, from a shyness, a *sauvagerie* I called it, that prevented her heeding my earnest prayers and entreaties to her to stop? Could I have done otherwise than pursue her, under the circumstances? Would she not have told her mother and sister, in terms exaggerated by her terror, that I had stolen on her slumber, and dared to profane with my lips, that face which never before had been pressed by man, save by her father? Should I not have been viewed as a reckless, heartless libertine, who, on the evening of the day that consigned my mother to the grave, could thus invade the privacy of one she

loved as her own child?" There were moments when this vain sophistry could silence my bitter self-reproaches; but soon came back the truth, armed with its stings. It whispered that had I forborne to indulge the impulse of my ill-regulated mind, had I, unseen, guarded her slumber, until she had awakened, and then followed her steps to prevent molestation or alarm to her from others; she, whose cold remains were now hastening to decay in a wild spot, where the solemn rites of the church, the sacred words of the minister of religion had never been heard to sanctify it, would now be alive and well, happy and dispensing happiness; and then a paroxysm of remorse and despair would overpower me.

I had been indulging these bitter reflections one day, when Mrs. Burnet, for the first time since my convalescence, addressed me more at length than in the usual few words of inquiry about my health, which she was in the habit of making daily, "Have you not noticed, my dear master," she said, "that you have had another nurse besides me, during your illness?"

"Yes, now you name it, I have a vague notion of having seen some one else hovering around my bed, but I have felt so strangely of late that I hardly knew how to distinguish between dreams and what was actually passing around me."

"Ah! Sir, you have a heart full of sensibility and kindness, and you have met with those who can truly appreciate it. Many a tear has Mrs. Maitland shed by your bed-side, when she heard you in your sleep lamenting the loss of her daughter."

I started, and was filled with terror, lest I had revealed my terrible secret.

"What did I say?" demanded I: "I now have a dim recollection that I had some fearful dreams about a young lady falling down from a high rock and my trying to save her!" said I, anxious to account for any strange disclosures I might have made in my sleep. But there was no occasion for this ruse. Those who had listened to my wild and broken exclamations, had attributed them to the shock produced on my nervous system, by finding my mother dead, after my long and hurried journey to catch her last sigh, followed by the sudden and alarming disappearance of the daughter of her friend; the severe affliction in which I had beheld the mother and daughter plunged, and the fatigue I had encountered in the search, with their servant Ap Owen, which he had rather overrated, in order to prove his own zeal. The brain fever that followed accounted to Mrs. Maitland and the worthy Mrs. Burnet for the strange words I had uttered, and had gained me credit with them for a more than usual tenderness of heart and sympathy with the affliction that had befallen my mother's friend.

"But what did I say, my good Burnet?" demanded I, again anxious to know how far I might have revealed my dreadful secret.

"Why, Sir, you cried out, 'Oh! she has fallen over the rock. She will be killed. Oh God! I have driven her to this.' It is I who killed her!" And then, Sir, you talked so wildly about having hidden her corpse."

I was chilled by terror, while Burnet calmly

repeated my wild ravings; ravings which, alas! had but too much truth in them.

"Mrs. Maitland," resumed she, "was filled with gratitude for the deep interest which, it was plain from your words, you had taken in her misfortune. How strange, Sir, are the ravings of delirium! There were you accusing yourself of a terrible crime, which, if committed at all, must have been while you were sleeping that evening, worn down as you were by grief, and I in the next room, ready to answer the first ring of your bell. Lord bless us, thought I, if a poor man or a man of bad character, who had no one to answer for where he was during that evening, and to prove that he had not left his home, had uttered these self-accusations, he would have been apprehended, and probably his life put in jeopardy."

A shudder passed over my frame as I listened to these observations, and I became sensible how essential it must henceforth be for me to avoid having any one near enough to overhear me while I slept, lest I should betray myself.

"And has no intelligence of the young lady been had?" inquired I, trembling while I asked the question.

"Alas! no, Sir, though every place has been searched, advertisements inserted in several newspapers, and rewards offered for tidings of her, or for finding the body, no accounts have been received. Is it not a surprising, a wonderful thing, Sir?"

I longed, but dared not inquire, whether the clefts among the rocks had been searched, and yet it seemed so likely that they must have been examined, owing to the suppositions entertained by Ap Owen, from the first moment of her being missed, that there could be little doubt of it. How fortunate it had been that, as I had the folly of moving it, I had secured the corpse so securely. It was madness of me to have removed it from the place where it had dropped. Found there, it would naturally have been surmised that she had accidentally fallen over the cliff, her dear remains would have received the rites of Christian burial, her poor mother and sister would have the melancholy consolation of weeping over her grave, and the terrible suspense in which they now were, would be over.

How strange that all these obvious facts had not presented themselves to my mind on that fatal night! But I was maddened by the event, and incapable of thinking.

## CHAPTER XII.

The following day, Mrs. Burnet told me that Mrs. Maitland intended to come and see me. "I assure you, Sir, this good lady entertains for you a warm sentiment of affection," said the faithful creature. She perceived by my countenance that I was little disposed for the interview, which she attributed solely to the weak state of my health rendering me nervous, and unwilling to receive visitors.

"She will be much mortified and hurt if you decline seeing her, Sir, after her unceasing attention during your illness, and at a period, too, when she was suffering under so heavy an affliction."

"I will see her, my good Burnet, for I am truly sensible of all her kindness."

"And the young lady, too, Sir, has, I assure you, in spite of all her own affliction for the loss of a sister she positively doted on, shown the deepest interest about you, and has told me repeatedly she never could forget the sensibility you betrayed on that fatal night. She has always accompanied her mother here in her daily visits while you were so ill."

I shuddered at being told what ears had listened to my ravings, and was grateful to Providence that they passed but as the promptings of delirium. When I learned that Mrs. Maitland had come, I screwed my courage to its utmost pitch to enable me to meet her with calmness; but when, on entering, she approached the sofa on which I reclined, and kindly clasped my hand within hers, inquiring in the gentlest tone of voice about my health, I felt ready to sink to the earth. Suspense and sorrow had made terrible inroads on her health since the eventful night on which I had seen her; and the fatigue of her frequent vigils by my sick couch had, I felt sure, added to the weakness of her frame. I attempted to say something about the late mysterious and terrible affair, but ere I could form the words, she entreated me not to refer to that subject; for "although," added she, "it occupies all my thoughts, I have not yet acquired sufficient self-control to speak of it without its bringing on such violent paroxysms of grief as nearly to destroy me."

"I have still a child on earth," said she, "though my first-born has been snatched from me. For the sake of my remaining daughter I would fain live until she shall have found a protector; but God's will be done; and all I pray for is resignation to bear it as I ought."

The mortal pallor of her face, the tremulous motion of her lips, and her difficult breathing, convinced me that her health had received so severe a shock as to leave but little chance of its ever recovering.

Mrs. Maitland had been very lovely; and pale and attenuated as she now was, her face still retained much of its pristine beauty, and her figure, though fragile, was graceful and dignified. Whether it was the force of imagination or not, I could not decide; but every time I looked at her I was struck with her strong resemblance to that lost and lovely being who, although only beheld for a few brief minutes, had left an impression on my mind never to be effaced. I felt drawn towards the bereaved mother by an irresistible impulse, and she, grateful for my attention, soon learned to repay it with an unfeigned regard. She visited me daily, often bringing her daughter to see me; and although, during the first few interviews, the sight of this beautiful creature, owing to her striking resemblance to her lost sister, moved and greatly agitated me, I had sufficient self-control to conceal my emotion, and by degrees habituated myself so much to her presence that after some weeks it became

indispensable to my happiness. Happiness! and dared I aspire to this boon?—was it possible, with the terrible secret pent up in my heart, and bowed down by the consciousness of having caused the death of one of the fairest and purest beings that ever lived—of having steeped her mother and sister in a grief that was preying on the life of one, and embittering that of the other, that I could hope for happiness? Yet such is man. So prone is he to forget the evil he brings on others, and to look for enjoyment, that not even the severest trials can long subdue this inherent selfishness and presumption!

Louisa Maitland was exceedingly lovely, and allowed by all who knew her to be the very image of her sister. This strong resemblance which, during the first weeks of my acquaintance, produced so trying an effect on my nerves, came at last to have a soothing one on them. When she looked at me mildly and sweetly, I used to fancy that it was a sign that the departed one had pardoned me for being the involuntary cause of her untimely death; and as my passion for her increased until it engrossed my whole soul, I cheated myself into the belief that, by seeking her hand, and becoming a son to the bereaved mother, I should best atone for the misfortune I had brought on both. It was long ere I had sufficient strength to leave the house, and I was so anxious to continue to enjoy the daily visits, now become absolutely necessary to my peace, that even after I was able to move abroad, I was so fearful of a discontinuance of them, that I still assumed the semblance of weakness and languor, which kept these dear beings for several hours every day by my sofa. Days, weeks, and months glided away, my passion for the lovely Louisa hourly increasing. She seemed not insensible to the attachment she had inspired. There were moments when her glance met mine with answering tenderness, and her delicate white hand trembled when I touched it, but with the coyness peculiar to the most faultless of her sex, and which, when not assumed, forms one of their greatest charms, her eyes would immediately seek the ground, her fair cheeks would become suffused with blushes, and for hours after she would avoid meeting my glance.

Oh! those were delicious days, when I awoke with the certainty of seeing her, of hearing that dulcet voice which thrilled me, and made my very heartstrings vibrate; of catching those deep and thoughtful eyes fixed on my face, to be hastily withdrawn if mine met them, and of noting, with all an impassioned lover's rapture, various indications, unconscious on her part, of the progress I was making in her affections! Engrossed and selfish as I was, I noticed not that the health of Mrs. Maitland was daily becoming more impaired, until she at length avowed that she was no longer equal to the exertion of making her diurnal visit to me. I looked at her when she owned this sad truth, and her altered face but too plainly bore evidence of it. How did I reproach myself for having permitted her to undergo this fatigue, when I was perfectly able to have gone to her house; and the uncontrollable burst of tears which the avowal drew from her daughter, although it proved that she, too, had not been aware of the increased indisposi-

tion of her mother, and thereby gave me the heartfelt gratification of guessing that *her* thoughts, like my own, had all been directed to another point, could not mitigate my self-reproach. We glanced for a moment at each other, and in that glance all was revealed.

"Don't weep, dearest," said Mrs. Maitland, "I cannot bear your tears. I have long been wishing to make you aware of the truth, but I have not had courage."

"Oh! mother! dearest mother!" exclaimed Louisa, leaving her seat, and clasping her arms around her parent, and the tears of mother and child mingled together. "Do not say that you are in danger. Oh! do not hint that you, too—"

And here her violent emotion impeded her utterance. I arose from the sofa, and, kneeling before Mrs. Maitland, seized her attenuated hand, and implored her to listen to me with indulgence.

"I have loved Louisa since the first hour of our acquaintance," said I: "we have all three experienced such affliction, that I waited until the heavy sense of it had been softened before I dared to avow the deep, the devoted tenderness, I entertain for her. Suffer me to entreat, if I may hope for a return of affection on her part; and if I am to be so blessed, give me the right of becoming your son, and let one roof henceforth shelter us. Speak, dear, adored Louisa; will you accept my hand, and give your dear, your excellent mother, the most devoted and dutiful of sons, whose study from this hour shall be to ensure her comfort and your happiness?"

Louisa, disengaging one of her white arms from the neck of her mother, her face still hidden on the maternal breast, put her hand into mine, but was incapable of uttering a single word. The grace, the innocent confidence of her gesture, melted me to tears. I pressed the little dimpled hand to my lips, to my heart, and implored Mrs. Maitland to say that she would not oppose my happiness.

"This is all so sudden, so unexpected," said she, "that it has taken me by surprise. But I will not be disingenuous with you. I at once grant my consent, and feel, that in doing so, that I can now die whenever it pleases the Almighty to call me hence, without any anxiety about my child. Your dear departed mother often expressed to me her desire that you should wed one of my daughters, and in according my consent, I feel that I am acting in consonance with her wishes. Take Louisa's hand, and with it my blessing on both your heads, my dear children."

Louisa sank on her knees by my side, while her mother, placing her trembling hands on our heads, breathed a heart-felt prayer that our union might be crowned with as much happiness as is ever allotted to creatures of earth. I embraced my future mother-in-law, and pressed my betrothed to my heart; while she, her beautiful cheeks suffused with blushes, over which her pearly tears shone like dew-drops on a rose leaf, hid her face on my shoulder. Mrs. Burnet, the faithful attendant of my mother, was called in to hear the happy tidings, and wept tears of joy as she listened.

How blissful were the days that followed! I went to Mrs. Maitland's house early, and remained there until reminded by my Louisa that it was time for her mother to retire for the night. Who can describe the delight of listening to beautiful lips murmuring admissions, rather than avowals of affection—referring to the first consciousness of love, and to the hopes and fears that ever accompany it—to the sleepless hours, and to the dreams that follow them of the beloved one—of the thousand nameless incidents and thoughts, that mark a growing tenderness hidden in the youthful heart that trembles lest its secret should be revealed. How rapid, how uninteresting does the whole world appear, in comparison with the circumscribed circle which contains all one dotes on! What power, that dignity and wealth could bestow, would one accept in exchange for the rapture of feeling oneself beloved by a creature lovely as our mother Eve ere she had sinned, and pure and guileless as an infant!

The rapture that succeeded my betrothal with Louisa for some days banished the recollection of her unbred sister, save when, on proceeding in my daily visit to Mrs. Maitland, I had to pass the scene where the terrible catastrophe that caused her death, had occurred. Then it would break on me, inflicting such pain on my heart, that the smiles and joyous welcome of my betrothed could alone chase the gloomy remembrance from my mind. There were moments, too, when, in all the *épanchements* of confiding love, Louisa would speak to me of her sister—would dwell on her perfections, on her tenderness, and weep her loss, her tears falling on my breast; where, with almost infantine simplicity, she would rest her head when aught excited her feelings.

"Oh! how you would have loved her," would she say; "she was so beautiful, so good, so far superior to me in every respect."

The emotion I could not conceal at such references to the dead, was believed by my Louisa to originate in my sympathy with her regret, and she loved me the more, as she often artlessly confessed, for this proof of affection.

And now the few necessary preparations for our marriage having been made, an ample provision for my future mother-in-law and wife, in case of my death, being secured, our nuptials were to be celebrated with the privacy desired by us, and suitable to the afflictions we had all undergone six months before.

Previous to this ceremony, I wished to visit the cavern, in order to conceal more securely the corpse of the lovely and unfortunate girl, there hidden. I had, ever since my recovery, been haunted by the desire to do this, but had postponed the sad visit through a moral cowardice, that made me shrink from it with dismay. The passion that had taken possession of my heart, filling it with visions of delight and aspirations of happiness, was little calculated to sober down my mind to such a trial. I dreaded it. I feared that it would chase away the voluptuous feelings that had grown on me of late; that it would cloud the bright prospect of happiness that had opened on me, and that it might produce a revolution of feeling from which I should not be



able to emancipate myself. Who is it that has not, after some heavy trial, some severe affliction which has occasioned long hours of mental agony, feared to open again the wounds only beginning to close, but not yet healed? Who has not dreaded to look on a picture, a lock of hair, or the garments of the dear departed object, aware that the sight of them will renew the bitterness of grief, and occasion the wounds to bleed afresh? There are cells in the brain, the doors of which, heaven, in mercy to our weakness, permits to close, but which, if touched by memory, fly open, and "wake the nerve where agony is born." We know, we feel, that in those cells our sorrow slumbers, and we tremble lest aught should arouse it, and interrupt the reprieve we have enjoyed. On the slightest symptom of memory awaking, we try to divert her attention to other points; we endeavor to silence her whispers—for so prone is man to selfishness, and so anxious to seek enjoyment, that he shrinks from all that can interrupt it.

I wished to be secure from the possibility of the corpse being discovered at any future period, not that I apprehended any danger at present, but I fancied my mind would be easier, more at liberty to enjoy the bliss that awaited my union with the lovely Louisa, if the remains of her sister were consigned to a grave. I had provided myself with a lantern to guide my path in the moonless nights returning from Mrs. Maitland's, and I secretly conveyed a spade and pickaxe from the gardener's shed, as well as a portion of some new matting, found in the same place. Feigning a headache, I left my betrothed much earlier than was my wont, two evenings previous to the day fixed for our marriage, and stealthily entering my garden, I took the matting, spade, and pickaxe, as also a small prayer-book, which I had put in my pocket in the morning, and stole to the spot known only to myself. I had great difficulty in reaching it, encumbered as I was. My feet slipped several times in the dangerous descent, and a dread of being hurled to the bottom, like her who thus met her death, chilled me with terror every time I stumbled. Six months ago, on that terrible night when I last visited this spot, I would have hailed death as a release from the misery and remorse that had seized me. Life then showed me nothing but a protracted state of suffering. But now the blooming bride, who was to bless my arms in two days more, seemed to stand before me arrayed in all her witching charms, and to live with her, to call her mine, rendered existence a boon that I shuddered at the bare possibility of risking.

At length I reached the opening of the cavern; I entered it, laid down the lantern, which cast its faint but lurid light on the grotesque rocks around. A sickening dread stole over me at the thought of the change which six months must have effected in the corpse I was about to touch, and I drew back with instinctive disgust and horror at the task I had to fulfil. Nevertheless, that task must be performed, however loathsome, however appalling the operation might be, and I moved towards the opening of the inner cavern, with the intention of drawing out the body, when the loud hooting of an owl so

startled me that I nearly fell to the earth. Ashamed of my pusillanimity, I once more approached the spot, knelt down, and, though shuddering while I did so, drew forth the corpse by the feet. At that moment, a huge bat flew against the lantern, which I had placed on a projecting rock, upset it, and extinguished the light. For some time I felt unable to move, and almost incapable of thinking, my hand still clasping the icy feet. At length I recovered myself sufficiently to grope in the direction in which the lantern had fallen; and, after a considerable time spent in searching for it, I found it, and struck a light with a tinder-box, which I had fortunately put into my pocket in fear of accidents. I dared not look on the face of the dead. The shawl I had wrapped around it still enveloped it, and most thankful was I that I was saved the horror of beholding its altered state. I commenced digging a grave, large drops of perspiration dropping from my forehead, while, with the pickaxe, I endeavored to loosen the compact earth to enable the spade to penetrate it. While I thus labored, huge bats were continually flitting around me, and from time to time the screech-owls sent forth their lugubrious cries.

I dug deep into the earth, and though ready to drop with fatigue, from the hard and unusual labor, I desisted not until I had penetrated some five feet beneath its surface. I then, averting my head while I did so, raised the body in my arms. Its extreme lightness astonished me, but the cause was revealed when the shawl, accidentally falling aside, exposed one of the arms and hand of the deceased, which, owing, I suppose, to some peculiar quality in the earth or air in which the corpse had rested, had become dried up like those of a mummy. Though shocked at beholding the withered, discolored limb, it was less dreadful than to see it in an advanced state of decomposition as I expected, and emitting that fearful odor which marks the decay of mortality. Nothing of this assailed my olfactory nerves, and I was grateful to Providence for being spared it. I placed the matting as a lining in the grave, and then descending into it with my lifeless burden, using as much tenderness towards it as if it were still susceptible of feeling, I placed it gently in its last earthly resting-place, and read the burial service over it.

The sound of my own voice as I pronounced the solemn words of that sacred and touching service, powerfully affected me; no human accent gave the responses, but the birds of night shrieked dismally while I prayed. I then covered the corpse with a remaining piece of the matting, and commenced filling up the grave with the earth I had previously dug, shrinking during the operation at the thought that the cloak and matting alone intervened between the corpse and the clay I was shovelling over it. I would have given heaps of gold had I possessed them, to have had a coffin in which to place the cold remains, but this was not possible; and although I shuddered at every spadeful of earth I threw into the grave, I nevertheless continued my painful labor until the floor of the cavern resumed its former appearance. I then strewed dust over the spot, and arming myself with the pickaxe, spade, and lantern bade a sorrowful farewell to it.

Oh! thought I, as I ascended the cliffs, could I but see her grave in some consecrated spot, where the mild air of summer could visit, or the moon-beams play over it; where those who knew her spotless life and fair form, could bestow a passing sigh, or breathe a prayer, I should feel less wretched. But alas! it may not be; and thou, lovely and guileless being, art denied a fitting sepulchre, though thy memory will ever be cherished in the hearts of those who loved thee, and of him, who, by a terrible fatality, caused thy death!

### CHAPTER XIII.

WITH stealthy steps I reached my home, replaced the pickaxe and spade in the garden house, rubbed the dust and earth off my clothes, and entered by a key with which I had provided myself, at the commencement of my visits to Mrs. Maitland, in order to save my good Burnet the necessity of getting up to let me in. On entering my bed-room, I again carefully examined and brushed my garments, and then, worn out by emotion and fatigue, I sought my pillow, and fell into a deep slumber, from which I awoke not until the beams of a bright sun had illumined my chamber.

On first awaking, I was almost disposed to question whether all that had occurred the previous night had not been a dream; but as the whole scene passed through my memory, its reality was evident, and, strange to say, my mind felt more at ease than before.

The chances of the possibility of detection, now that the corse was hidden in the deep grave, seemed less than ever, and I felt satisfied with myself for having had courage enough to carry my resolution of consigning it to the earth into effect.

I arose from my bed with unusual alacrity, to superintend the arrangements for the reception of my bride and her mother on the ensuing day, and busied myself as a lover only can do, in seeing everything set in order. For the first time since my poor mother's death the house assumed a cheerful aspect. Several articles of modern fashion and elegance had been sent down from London to render the apartments allotted for my bride more suitable to her age and taste, and I took almost a childish pleasure in placing them. Nothing was neglected that could administer to the comfort of my future mother-in-law. It was a relief to the remorse that haunted me, to show her all the duty and affection of a son, as an atonement for the affliction I had involuntarily drawn on her. It was this sentiment which had induced me to overrule all her objections to give up her own house, and to become an inmate of mine, where she could enjoy the constant society and attention of her only daughter, and be relieved from all the cares of house-keeping. Mrs. Burnet, who entertained a sincere affection for her, was greatly pleased with this arrangement, and did all in her power to contribute to its being

carried satisfactorily into effect. Two chambers, opening into each other, and on the same floor with mine, were fitted up as a bed-room and sitting-room for Mrs. Maitland. Comfortable sofas and easy chairs were placed in each, for the use of the invalid; her *prie-Dieu* stood near her bed; Mrs. Burnet, who was well acquainted with her personal habits, having attended to all these matters. I looked around when everything had been completed, and was struck with the air of elegance and comfort which the whole house presented. I felt sure it would be a most agreeable surprise to my sweet Louisa, and that the pains I had taken to render her mother's apartments all that could be desired, would be received by her as a most delicate and acceptable proof of affection to herself. A cook had been engaged from the next town a few days before, and the savory odors sent forth from the kitchen, bore evidence that she was busy in culinary arrangements for the wedding dinner. In short, all wore the aspect of preparation and cheerfulness, for though occasionally the good-natured face of Mrs. Burnet would be clouded by a momentary sadness at the thought of her departed mistress, who, had she lived, would have been so well pleased at my marriage, or, by the recollection of the mysterious fate of the lovely creature whom she had loved since her early childhood, she saw much to be thankful for in the coming union, and hailed it with unfeigned satisfaction. I left my house to dine and spend the evening with my future bride, rejoicing at the thought that this was to be the last time I should leave her at night. I found her with the traces of tears in her beautiful eyes, and felt chilled at the sight. Was there so little sympathy between us that, while I was rejoicing in the anticipation of the coming day, and the happiness it would bring me, she had passed the hours in weeping? Something of my annoyance was revealed in my face, although my lips expressed nothing of it, and the quick eye of affection instantly detected the feeling. Louisa placed her hand in mine, and leaning her lovely face on my shoulder, said:—

"Do not, dearest, be offended by my tears. In the preparations for leaving the home of my childhood, I have had to open drawers never looked into since the fatal evening that snatched from me a sister so dearly, fondly loved, that not even the happiness in store for me, in a union with you, can check the renewed agony awakened in my breast by the sight of these memorials of her; and I wonder how I have been able to overcome, in a few brief months, the anguish of such a blow, sufficiently to think of happiness, nay, to have felt it. Oh! my beloved, how engrossing must my attachment to you have been, when I could forget *her*, even for an hour?" and here a fresh shower of grief streamed down the cheeks of the lovely girl.

Every one of these tears seemed to inflict a wound on my heart. I pressed Louisa to my breast, and melted into tenderness by her deep emotion, which but too powerfully excited my remorse for its cause, I mingled my tears with hers. How exquisitely constituted—how nobly generous is the heart of woman! No sooner did this delicate creature feel my warm tears fall on

her brow, than, raising her head, and looking at me with a glance of unutterable tenderness, she exclaimed,—

"Forgive me, dearest, for inflicting pain on you. Your sympathy is a balm for every wound, and when I see you weep for *her*, whom, had you known, you would have loved, a new bond of affection seems added to that which already binds us. I have often thought, Marmaduke, that had you seen—had you known *her*—*she* must have been the object of your choice. Your dear mother had selected *her* to be your wife—not, I do believe, that she liked her better than me, for she displayed no more affection for one than the other—but because she was the elder. Yes; you must have preferred Frances; for though we were always considered to be very much alike, she was so superior to me in every way, that near her, I must have passed unnoticed."

I replied that Louisa would always have been the object of my choice; that, from the first moment I had beheld her, I loved her. She was soothed by these avowals; and with a charming *naïveté* said,

"I have sometimes trembled at the notion that had you preferred my lost Frances, how dreadful would have been my fate; for I could not have helped loving you. But I would have locked up the secret in my own heart for ever. I never would have let any human being know it. God alone, to whom I would confess it in my prayers, should have been acquainted with the fact, and *He*, perhaps, would have given me courage to bear it."

Even now, though many a long year has passed away, though age has cast its snows on my hair, and chilled the heart once so warm, I still seem to behold the blushing cheek and tear-dewed eyes of my beautiful Louisa, as she uttered the words I have repeated.

Every word uttered by my sweet Louisa inflicted a pang on my heart, and sounded like the knell of departing hope. I had entered the house, elated by the anticipation of my approaching happiness, and expecting to see the face of my beloved dressed in smiles to receive me. But how had I found her? Pale, and with eyes swollen from weeping! How unlike a bride about to be wedded to the object of her affection! How badly this argued for my ill-starred nuptials! Oh! if Louisa could but dream of the part I had in the fearful death of the sister she doted on, how would she shrink back affrighted from the altar, and fly from my sight! The mother, too, whose pallid lips every day pressed my brow with a maternal kiss, what would her feelings be, could she divine that mine had profanely dared to touch the forehead of her lost daughter, a brief moment ere, terrified by that profanation, she had, in her flight to avoid me, met a violent death! What a prospect for the future did the union of the coming morrow hold out! Three persons united by holy ties—who ought to have no mystery, no concealment from each other—yet, one of these three, fully conscious that if the other two knew the terrible secret locked up in his breast, they would shun, if they did not curse him.

All these thoughts awoke in my mind, as I

looked on the pale and weeping girl before me. It was yet time to fly from her presence, ere the knot was tied that must bind her destiny to that of the involuntary destroyer of her sister. Yet, dolt, fool, and selfish as I was, I had not courage to abandon this lovely being, and I silenced the scruples that conscience urged, by mentally pledging myself that my whole life should be devoted to the atonement of the one fatal sin of my existence, by my unceasing efforts to render my future wife and mother-in-law happy. I knew not then, blinded as I was by an all-engrossing passion, that to render those dear to us happy, we must have the only secure basis for happiness in our own hearts—a spotless conscience, and no secrets. The heart and mind must be open as day to the wife of our bosom, so that should a cloud arise, she may be able to understand its cause, if not to dispel it. No guard must be placed on the lips,—one must be able to *think aloud* with the partner of our joys and sorrows.

Could this be my case? Alas, no! Henceforth I must be ever on the watch, lest I should betray my terrible secret. Even in my sleep, there would be no security for me; and the undying grief of those with whom my future life was to be passed, would, I now foresaw, for ever keep alive the remembrance of the dread catastrophe I had occasioned. The veil placed by love seemed removed from my eyes. The future was shaded by the most sombre hues. I felt that oblivion of my sin was hopeless, while brought in such close contact with those who must every hour of my life recall it to my memory. But it was now too late to draw back from the engagement, of which the morrow was to witness the ratification. How could my withdrawing from it be accounted for? I had won the virgin heart of one of the fairest and most faultless of women—a woman, whose qualities and disposition were calculated to render any attachment she formed enduring. Her peace must fall a sacrifice to the breaking off of our engagement, at the very day fixed for its fulfilment; and could I, as a man of honor, or a man of feeling, resolve on such a measure now? With the vanity from which none of my sex are exempt, I believed that so strong must be the attachment I had inspired, that misery, if not death, must ensue to Louisa, if I broke off our marriage. I cheated myself into the belief, that I could make the sacrifice of resigning *her*; so prone are we to give ourselves credit for a heroism and abnegation of self, of which we are little capable; and while thus reasoning, the indulgence of my own passion had, I fear, much more weight in my decision, than a consideration for its result on hers.

All the while that I tried to think that the non-fulfilment of our engagement must inflict misery on Louisa, the dread of losing her at the very moment she was to be given to my longing arms, was what most influenced my conduct. No! The die was cast; I would wed her on the morrow, come what might; and the possession of such a creature could not, I felt persuaded, fail in chasing gloom and unhappiness away. My love, my tenderness, and unceasing attention would, *must* render her happy, and in time

banish painful recollections from her mind; and the reflection of her happiness must restore and establish mine. Inspired by these new-born hopes, I pressed my beauteous Louisa in my arms, imploring her not to render me wretched by the indulgence of her grief at the approach of our wedding-day; and she, soothed by my tenderness, smiled on me through her tears, and reverted no more during the day to the subject that had re-opened her grief, although I saw, by her occasional change of color and pensive countenance, that her thoughts were with the dead.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

My sleep was troubled, and my dreams haunted that night. I seemed to stand before the altar with my beloved, her hand clasped in mine; and I was on the point of placing the nuptial ring on her delicate finger, when suddenly the shade of her sister rose up between us, and with a stern countenance waved me from her presence. In vain I strove to retain my place, to grasp the hand of my bride; the shadowy, but menacing figure of the dead always interposed between us, to prevent the performance of the sacred ceremony; and gasping, trembling, with the cold drops of perspiration falling from my brow, I started from slumber in an agony of horror. Good heavens! if such fearful visions were to haunt my couch when my bride became a sharer of it, how dreadful would be my position, and how might I betray the fatal secret! I left my bed. I walked up and down my chamber, and tried to reason myself out of the terror my dreams had inspired: but my efforts to conquer it were in vain; for when, tired and exhausted, I again dropped into sleep, the same dreams returned, until, unable any longer to support them, I left my pillow at early morn, and sought in the fresh air to cool my fevered brow, and recover my self-possession.

"I hope, sir, you are not ill," said the worthy Mrs. Burnet, when we met; "but you look so pale and haggard, that I am sure you have not slept."

I muttered some excuse for my altered looks, walked from room to room to see that all was ready for the reception of my bride and her mother, and then set out to conduct them to the church, where the nuptial ceremony was to be performed. They had laid aside their mourning dresses in honor of the day; but the laying by mourning occasions almost as much sadness as the putting it on, by reminding the wearer of the person for whose loss it had been assumed.

Louisa looked pale, and her eyes retained the traces of tears. Her mother always, since the loss of her daughter, grave and pensive, was unusually so on this occasion, and I felt my spirits oppressed with gloom as I witnessed the too evident symptoms of the depression of theirs. Was this a nuptial morning? I asked myself, hurt and disappointed by this sadness. Was this, which I expected to be the happiest day of my

life, to be ushered in with sighs and tears? Such were the reflections which my selfishness suggested; and I felt more disposed to be offended with my gentle bride for the demonstrations of sorrow which she vainly sought to conceal, than to soothe her by my tenderness.

Several of our humble neighbors, to each and all of whom Mrs. Maitland and her daughters had been endeared by acts of kindness, were in the church to witness our marriage. Louisa pronounced the sacred vows with an unflinching voice, for which, in my heart, I thanked her; mine was, I fear, less firm: and when I attempted to place the ring on her finger, I was in such a tremor that it fell from my trembling hand. Louisa turned pale at this incident, but the ring was soon found; I put it on her finger, and when I pressed my lips to hers, I would not have changed places with the proudest monarch on earth. We received the warm congratulations of our worthy pastor and of the individuals of his flock in our immediate neighborhood, and felt cheered by the unfeigned good-will they evinced on the occasion. The former had promised to partake of our wedding dinner, and we took leave of our humble friends at the church door, to return to our home.

The walk from the church to our residence was but a short one; nevertheless, such was the languor and increased weakness of my mother-in-law, that, though aided by the support of my arm and that of her daughter, she advanced so slowly that it took us a considerable time to reach our own door. How I longed to instal my bride in the home her presence was henceforth to adorn! How impatient I felt to know whether the alterations and improvements I had made in the rooms, and the new and tasteful furniture I had placed in them, would please her! I counted every minute that fled—nay, every step of our progress, anticipating the surprise and satisfaction the arrangements I had made would afford; and my sweet Louisa, guessing and sympathizing with my feelings, had banished every trace of gloom and sorrow from her beautiful face, and repaid me for my affectionate care of her parent by the sweetest smiles and fondest glances.

"Ah, there is our home!" exclaimed she; "how picturesque, how cheerful it looks! How beautifully the creepers have grown around the rustic porch; how well they look enwreathing the windows of our home! May God send down a blessing on it and us, and long preserve our dear, dear mother, to crown our happiness by her presence!"

And the gentle, affectionate creature turned and embraced her parent, into whose eyes tears started, which she turned away her head to conceal. Mrs. Burnet came forth to welcome us, and led the way into the dining-room, where a neatly served and tempting collation awaited us, and where I embraced my bride and her mother before they seated themselves to partake of it: Everything was found to be delicious. The ladies, at my entreaties, even consented to drink a little wine—a very unusual thing with them. and I then proceeded to show them their separate apartments. My mother-in-law's was the first we entered, and so pleased was she with the

neatness and comfort of its arrangements, that she affectionately pressed my hand as she declared that nothing had been forgotten.

"How thoughtful, how kind, my dear son," added she; while Louisa, touched to the heart by my forethought and consideration for her parent's comfort, threw herself into my arms, and pressed me to her heart. I then led them to the rooms prepared for my bride, with which they expressed themselves to be charmed; though Louisa's blushing cheek and downcast eyes revealed that the timidity and maidenly reserve so natural to her position checked the expressions of pleased surprise to which she had given utterance on beholding the chamber of her mother. Then the drawing-room, and small, but well-stored library, were examined. These had been entirely new furnished, and enlarged by bay-windows, which greatly improved them.

"How tasteful, how elegant, how comfortable!" burst from both mother and daughter.

"Here are your chairs, dear mother," said I, pointing out a *bergere* in each of the rooms, with abundant pillows to prop up her weak frame, and an ease-and-comfort to each, while a small table was placed within reach, to hold whatever she might require.

These new proofs of thoughtfulness and consideration for the comfort of her parent delighted Louisa. She thanked me with a kiss impressed on my brow; and her mother prayed God to bless me, adding that I had all my dear mother's good nature and tact in providing for the comfort of those dear to her. The pleasure afforded by an examination of their new home had exhilarated the spirits of my wife and mother. For the first time since I had known them I saw smiles brighten their countenances, and I hailed this change as a good omen of future happiness, for which I was truly grateful.

How lovely looked my bride! her delicate fairness often illumined by a rosy blush, as I whispered passionate vows of love in her ear. I felt the happiest of mortals; for I forgot in the excess of my affection, and the delight of calling my own the beautiful creature by my side, the one dark spot that had for so many months clouded my days and embittered my nights; I forgot the gloomy cavern and new-made grave where I had so lately deposited the mortal remains of one who, had I not crossed her path, would have now been as fair and blooming as my bride, a witness and partaker of our happiness. All this was forgotten while looking in the soft and loving eyes of my own Louisa, and I blessed her for this power of banishing from my thoughts every object but herself. And yet, while blessing her for banishing from my mind the one dark cloud that obscured its sunshine, back came the sorrowful remembrance. The lonely and unsanctified grave in the cavern! with its decaying tenant uncoffined, unsealed,—wrapped not in the garments of the honored dead, but in those worn in life, with naught to preserve that once beautiful form from contact with the reptiles that prey upon the dead, but the cloak and coarse matting in which I had enveloped it! What a sad, sad contrast did the cheerful, well appointed, and luxurious home, to which I had brought one of the sisters, offer to the grave to which I had con-

signed the other! I shuddered as the thought passed through my brain, but sought to chase it by trying to fix my attention solely on the present. But remorse is not to be defrauded of its rights; and even on this, that should have been the brightest day of my life, dark clouds inter-veped to shadow it.

And now the hour appointed for dinner approached. Our worthy pastor arrived, and the faithful Mrs. Burnet tapped at the door to inquire whether dinner might be served, when a man on horseback rode rapidly up to the gate, of which one of the windows of the room we were sitting in commanded a view, and rang the bell loudly. A presentiment of evil tidings made me shudder; and yet what bad news had I to apprehend? All my happiness was comprised in the lovely creature before me; and while she was near me, well in health, loving,—and oh, how beloved!—what had I to fear? Nevertheless I *did* fear, as all must who, in the brief space allowed for perfect happiness to pause with them, tremble at every incident, however trivial, lest it should prove an interruption.

"Good God!" exclaimed Louisa, turning pale as marble, "who can this stranger be, and what brings him here to-day?"

"A stranger!" repeated her mother. "Oh! heaven be praised. Perhaps he brings me tidings of my child;" and trembling with emotion, she arose from her chair, and hurried to the entrance-hall, followed by Louisa and our pastor. For me, overpowered by her words, which brought the whole scene of the late burial before me, the thought flashed across my mind, that this stranger must be in some way or other connected with a discovery, and I reeled, and would have fallen to the ground, had I not grasped the back of a sofa, near which I had been standing. I trembled, gasped for breath, and felt so faint, that, although fully aware of how strange my absence from my wife and mother must appear, at such a moment, I could hardly totter to the hall to join them. I found Mrs. Maitland in an agony of grief, supported by our pastor and my Louisa, who herself, pale as death, and tears streaming down her cheeks, was vainly endeavoring to soothe her unhappy parent. I feared to approach them, but Louisa, seeing me enter the hall, uttered my name in a tone of such mingled grief and tenderness, that I rushed towards her, and she fell fainting into my arms.

"Yes, Sir," said the stranger, a rude-looking and uncouth man, who, on observing a fresh listener arrive, thought it incumbent on him to repeat his story, "the body of the young lady has been found, and no later than this very morning. Ever since the reward was offered, many have kept a sharp look-out, but it was my good luck to find it, and so I galloped off as fast as I could to bring the news. I went first to the house these here ladies occupied, but was told as how there had been a wedding to-day, and that they were come here to live. Well, says I to myself, this is a queer world; one daughter wanting a burying, while t'other is a-marrying and so I came off here."

This unhappy and unfeeling allusion produced a fresh paroxysm of grief in the mother and

daughter, that made me feel as though I could have annihilated the wretch who had occasioned it.

"Be silent," exclaimed I, angrily.

"Why, how can I tell those whom my business is with, all the particulars of how the body was found with the face half eaten by the fishes, and clothes gone all to pieces, and the long hair entangled with the gravel, rushes, and stones?"

"Hold your tongue, wretch, monster!" said I, half frenzied by witnessing the terrible effect produced on my wife and mother-in-law, on hearing these fearful particulars. So tremendous was it, that I would have given boundless wealth, had I possessed it, to have been able to remove the horrible impression from their minds, by assuring them that the face of her they mourned had never been defiled or disfigured save by the natural decay that follows death, and that it had been consigned with tenderness to an earthly grave—that no profane eye had gazed on it, no rude hand touched it, and that fervent and heartfelt prayers, however unworthy the lips that breathed them, had been offered up to the throne of Grace, when the corpse had been consigned to the grave! But these consolatory truths my cruel destiny had for ever precluded me from uttering, and I wrung my hands in torture, as I felt how powerless I was to afford relief to the agonized hearts of those so dear to me. Assisted by the pastor and Mrs. Burnet, I conducted them back to the drawing-room, followed, in spite of my angry reproaches, by the callous messenger, loudly urging his claims to the offered reward for finding the body, that I well knew was deposited in the earth.

"It may not, after all, my dear madam," said the pastor, wishing to mitigate the mother's grief and horror, "be the corpse of your daughter."

"But I maintain that it is," interrupted the messenger of evil tidings, "and so does every one who has seen it; for though the eyes and nose are gone, and the rest of the face greatly disfigured by the hungry fishes, still any one can see that the body is that of a very pretty young girl; and as no one else has been missing, it must be your daughter's, and I must be paid for my trouble."

"Retire to the hall," said I, frantic at hearing the feelings of my wife and mother harrowed by the fearful details of this man. "You shall receive your reward in a few minutes."

"But who is to pay the man as helped me to drag the body out of the water, and who took it to the barn where it is now lying?" demanded he.

"Go, leave the room, all shall be paid, but don't say another word."

"Ah! I see well enough how it is," replied the monster. "Ye are all vexed enough to have the pleasures of the wedding-day interrupted, and the feasting on all the good things, the smell of which is enough to make an alderman hungry, by my bringing you news you did n't want to hear, when you had all made up your minds to be making merry. Sure it is enough to melt a heart of stone to think that while you are all dressed so fine, and living in clover here, the poor girl, that ye don't so much as wear a black

rag for, is lying on a barn floor, and may be at this minute receiving as bad usage from the rats as she got from the fishes."

My mother-in-law, overpowered with horror, fell fainting on the sofa, while my poor Louisa was seized with a violent fit of hysterics. I rushed on the wretch, and would have felled him to the earth, but our pastor ran between us, and pulled him by the arm out of the room, while, pointing to the two unhappy women who required my care, he told me not to leave them.

And this was my wedding-day, that day so longed for, that was to have been the happiest one of my life! Never was there a house in which grief, dismay, and horror reigned more triumphantly than in mine. On whichever side I looked, faces bathed in tears met my sight, and hysterical sobs and groans, my ear. I was almost maddened, yet in the midst of my despair the consciousness that all this wretchedness had been the result of my folly, my sin, added poignancy to my tortures. Had I not concealed the corpse, it would have long, long since been discovered—would have received the rites of the church—would have been interred in consecrated ground—the grave might have been wept over by those who had doted on its tenant, and time, that sole healer of grief, would have, by this hour, softened down the agony, to the effects of which I was now a witness, to a tender pensive recollection of one never to be forgotten. When restored to consciousness, the first words uttered by my wife and mother expressed their intention of setting out for Pendine, to pay the last mournful duties to the dead.

"Take off these white dresses," said Mrs. Maitland, "and let me put on the mourning habiliments that never ought to have been laid aside until the fate of my lost child had been ascertained."

"Yes, let us go to her," sobbed my poor Louisa, so changed by grief that few would have recognised in the pale and trembling creature, deluged in tears, the lovely being, who, but two hours before, two little hours, was a blooming bride, smiling on her happy husband.

I went to my desk, took out gold enough to satisfy the rapacious wretch whose visit had turned my home from the abode of content to the house of mourning; and having dismissed him, I entreated our pastor to join his entreaties to mine, to persuade my wife and mother not to go to Pendine. I felt that the sight of the mutilated and fearful corpse described by him who had found it, would be a shock fatal to both—an opinion in which he fully agreed. Long and difficult was our task ere we could induce them to abandon their project, and allow me to go in their stead, accompanied by an old and faithful attendant of Mrs. Maitland, who had been the nurse of her daughters, the pastor promising not to leave the mourners until my return. The nurse was to take with her linen and suitable habiliments for the dead, which were to be put on by her; and no strange eyes were to behold the corpse, or strange hands to be employed to assist her.

I bade farewell to my bride, leaving her so overwhelmed in grief, that my departure

seemed hardly noticed by her, so deep was her renewed affliction for her sister; and I, selfish as I was, felt hurt and wounded that she could see me leave her without betraying any increased emotion. *Lore*, which reigned supreme in my heart, was, for the time being, eclipsed in hers, by awakened sisterly affection, and I, self-engrossed, could blame instead of sympathizing with her.

"Let the remains of my child be brought back and laid in a grave in the churchyard here, where mine will soon follow them," said the heart-broken mother; "or, if you have no objection, I should wish my lost child to be interred in your family vault, near my departed friend, your mother."

How could I refuse so natural a request, now that we were one family? and yet, to let the body of an utter stranger, of whose life or conduct we knew nothing, be intruded in the same vault with my parents, seemed to me nothing short of sacrilege, and an insult to them. Nevertheless, to this I must submit, for nothing could induce me to wound the already lacerated feelings of my unhappy mother-in-law, which I must have done had I refused her request.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE shades of night had obscured the surrounding scene, when, accompanied by the faithful nurse, I left my wretched home. The gloomy prospect accorded but too well with what was passing in my heart, and a superstitious presentiment that my future dreams and hopes of happiness would be frustrated and turned to misery, as were those of that day, filled my soul. Absorbed in moody reflections, I sank back in the carriage, reminded only by the sobs of my companion, that I was not alone. At length I conquered my reluctance to break silence by addressing a few words of kindness to the poor nurse, and this manifestation of sympathy opened her oppressed heart, and she gave vent to her feelings.

"Ah, Sir, had you known her—so beautiful, so gentle, and so good, you would not wonder at my sorrow. She was even when on earth an angel, and was too perfect to be long left us here. But to think of those delicate and fair limbs,—that lovely face, which no one ever looked on without admiring,—that long, soft, and flowing hair, I have so often combed and brushed with pride, being exposed to the impure water for long months, and to the ravenous and unclean creatures that dwell therein! Oh, it is too, too horrible, and almost deprives me of reason!"

And here the poor woman gave way to an agony of grief. What, thought I, if she should discover that the body is *not* that of Miss Maitland? And then a secret dread crept over me that such a discovery might lead not only to all the prolonged sufferings of suspense, but to continued researches for the corpse, destroying all hopes of happiness for months, nay, for years to come. With the selfish intention of warding

off this threatened misery, after reminding my weeping companion that all injuries inflicted on the body after life had fled were unfelt by the dead, I tried, while my tremulous voice disproved my assumption of philosophical indifference on such a point, to make her think that whether the mouldering flesh of the departed was fed on by the fishes of the water or the reptiles of the earth, availed little, and remarked, that probably no trace of resemblance might be found between the corpse we were to inter and the beautiful girl she so well remembered.

"Yes, Sir," replied she, "I've been thinking of that, and have prepared myself for it. I recollect in my youth seeing the body of a woman who had been drowned, after it had been some weeks in the water, and it was so terribly altered that her friends could not recognise it, and only knew it to be hers by the dress, though that, too, was in a sad state."

A new dread crossed my mind,—might not the clothes of the corpse prove that it was not that of Miss Maitland? It was true that the man who had found the body had said that they were nearly destroyed; but might not the fragments betray their texture, if not color? This dread haunted me during the rest of the journey; and while the nurse believed I was absorbed by regret, I was wholly occupied in thinking how to remedy this new cause of alarm. Never were three hours more wretchedly passed than those of our journey. Directed by an innkeeper, on the look-out for the arrival of one of the family, we proceeded to the barn in the environs of the other side of the town.

"Had the persons who found the body come to me, Sir," said the innkeeper, "I should certainly have had it moved to my house, and shown the proper respect to it; but I knew nothing of the matter for some time; when I did, I had a decent coffin, lined with flannel, made, and the body placed in it; and I took on myself—I hope I have done right—to have the torn fragments of clothes that still hung to the corpse burned, for fear of their causing infection."

The weight of a mountain seemed removed from my heart at this disclosure.

"What color was the dress, and was the linen fine?" demanded the nurse, in great trepidation.

"Both were in such a state as to render it impossible to recognise their color or quality," was the reply.

I had the poor remains wrapped in a pair of fine sheets of mine;—don't be alarmed, ma'am," (seeing the nurse start) "it was all done by woman's hands,—although, to confess the truth, the operation required no little courage, such was the fearful state of decomposition in which the body was."

"Alas, alas! and I shall not be able to look on the corpse?" said the nurse.

"I don't think you could support it, ma'am: but if you wish it you can have the lid of the coffin removed, for it is not yet screwed down," replied the innkeeper.

"Then I will see it," sobbed the nurse.

And together we entered the miserable barn, where the coffin was placed on a table, with a few candles scattered around to dispel the darkness, but which only partially effected that ob-

ject, leaving the greater portion of the large and rude room in deep shadow. Nothing could be more gloomy, more desolate, than the whole aspect of the barn. The servant, placed in it to watch by the dead, remained as far distant from the coffin as she could, while the finder of the body stood, in the background, ready to prove, in case any doubt of its identity was offered, that it was, and could be no other than that of the missing young lady, and wholly and solely because no one else had been missed from the neighborhood. The faithful nurse approached the coffin, trembling so violently that I was compelled to support her. The lid was removed, the top of the sheet that covered the head of the dead was drawn aside, and a face that scarcely retained a vestige of that of a human being—so fearful had been the ravages of the fishes and of decomposition—met our view. The nurse uttered a loud shriek, and fell fainting in my arms; while the finder of the body, who had advanced towards the spot where it now rested, exclaimed with a triumphant glance, "I knew she would identify it a glance. Sure the body of a common person could never be mistaken for that of a lady. I saw in a minute that the corpse was a gentlewoman."

"Yes, because a reward had been offered for the finding of a young lady," observed the servant of the innkeeper, looking disdainfully at him; "and had you found that of a man, you would have equally tried to persuade us it was that of the missing lady."

"Why you can't pretend to say this is not the body of the lady?" demanded the fellow, looking daggers at her. "All I can say," replied the woman, "is, that it is the body of a female; but whether gentle or simple, I cannot even guess, so terrible is the state in which it is."

"Have the coffin nailed down instantly," said I, "for I would not have this poor woman again behold that sight."

My orders were instantly complied with, while yet the nurse was in a state of insensibility, and I had her removed to the inn.

"I thought, Sir," said the servant of the innkeeper, "that perhaps the poor mother of the dead might like to have a lock of the hair, so I cut off one, and have carefully washed it. Here it is." And she took from her pocket a long tress of hair, as unlike both in color and texture that of Miss Maitland as it was possible to be; but I, nevertheless, took it, and liberally rewarded her for the trouble she had taken. I then gave instructions for having the coffin provided by the innkeeper placed in one more suited to the position of the family to which the dead was erroneously supposed to belong, ordered a hearse to convey it to the village church on the following day, and proceeded to the inn, where I found the poor nurse returned to consciousness, but so weak and nervous, that I compelled her to drink a glass of wine and retire to bed; after which I wrote a letter to my bride, stating the steps I had taken, and at what hour the mournful conveyance would reach the church the following day.

This was the first letter I ever addressed to my sweet Louisa; for, being in the habit of seeing her every day for the last four months, I had no occasion to write. And now it was decreed the

first letter she was to receive from me—and written on the day of our marriage too—was to be one in which deep sympathy for her grief precluded those expressions of passionate tenderness which filled my heart. Strange destiny! to be called away from her the very day that made her mine, and to be unable to touch on the torture the separation caused me; nay, even to feel that our meeting on the morrow would be, under existing circumstances, as mournful as our parting had been the previous one. How clouded, how sorrowful would our honey-moon be!—that epoch, that oasis in the desert of man's life, looked forward to by all men who marry for love as "*les plus beaux jours de leur vie*." But what right had I to count on a single day, nay, a single hour of happiness, after having caused the death of a fellow-creature by my folly, and entangled myself in a tissue of falsehood, from the meshes of which I felt it would be difficult, if not impossible, to escape?

There is no punishment so severe as that which results from our own misdeeds, for the self-reproach that follows them adds tenfold bitterness to their consequences. Had I not concealed the body of my victim, it must have been discovered where it fell, within a few hours thereafter, and ere this, Time would have softened the pangs of grief, and I might have hoped to enjoy a happy home; but now, reversing the case quoted by Hamlet, the preparations for the marriage feast were to furnish forth the funeral baked meats, and Death, always so awful, had broken in on my anticipated paradise, mocking my hopes, and scaring away my dreams of love.

Such was the selfishness of my nature, that willingly would I, had it been possible, have remained absent from my bride until time had soothed the poignancy of her sorrow, and that she could receive me with smiles; so great was my dread of witnessing the grief I had brought on her, and of being robbed by it of the happiness. I had looked forward to on my marriage. I was jealous, yes, absolutely, selfishly jealous, that my bride could be wholly engrossed by sorrow during the first hours of our marriage. Ought she not to have conquered her regret, and have thought only of me at such a time? To this unreasonable extent can selfishness urge those who yield to its blamable, its ignoble sway, rendering them insensible to the feelings of those best beloved, instead of opening their hearts to sympathy. I counted the long hours on my sleepy pillow, until, worn out, I fell into a feverish and unrefreshing slumber, from which I awoke paralysed by terror, large drops of cold perspiration falling from my brow, and my aching temples throbbing rapidly. I dreamed that I had been absent, and returned to my bride. Her rapturous delight at our meeting could only be equalled by mine. She was in her bridal bed, looking more lovely, more exquisitely beautiful than I had ever imagined aught of mortal birth could be; and she called to me, saying, "Come, my beloved, why tarriest thou from thy bride, thine own Louisa?" I rushed to embrace her with all a lover's ardor, when, lo! her beautiful face suddenly changed to the disfigured and dreadful one of the festering corpse I had seen in the coffin, the lacerated arms of which were hanging



around my neck to prevent my escape; and so closely did they press my throat that I felt suffocation coming on, until, with a mighty effort, I burst the bonds of sleep, and, springing from the hated couch, stood transfixed with horror in the middle of the chamber. Even now that I was awake, I could not shake off this fearful vision. When I tried to remember the fair and lovely face of my bride, the mutilated and terrible one of the corpse seemed to be before me, producing a loathing and horror that almost drove me mad. And now the icy coldness of my frame was turned to a feverish heat. I bathed my burning temples with water, I drank off a glass of the same liquid, and again sought my pillow. But sleep visited it no more; and ill at ease, both in mind and body, I arose at an early hour, to see that all was prepared for the funeral, at which I, knowing that the dead was a nameless stranger, an alien to the two families in whose vault her remains were to repose, was to follow as chief mourner. Oh! how I hated myself for all this deception, this sacrilege towards the buried dead, my honored father and mother. But it must be gone on with; my folly, my madness, had rendered it necessary to deceive my wife and mother-in-law.

When I met the faithful nurse in the morning, she reproached herself for not having fulfilled the commands of her mistress.

"Oh! Sir," said she, "who could have thought that the task I had undertaken could be so dreadful, so impracticable a one! Why, the very sight of the face almost stopped the current of life in my veins; and had I, as I intended, attempted to dress the dead in the habiliments I brought, I am quite sure I should have expired long before I could complete the operation. And to think that aught so lovely, so pure when in life, could be reduced to that fearful object which we saw—oh! Sir, it is terrible! And poor human nature, however strong the love, cannot conquer the disgust and horror such sights inspire?"

"Do not, my good nurse, I implore you," said I, "relate to your mistress or to my wife, the dreadful state in which we found the dead. It would only shock them, and aggravate their sufferings."

"You are right, Sir, I wouldn't for the world do so. The woman whom we found with the corpse, told me this morning, Sir, that she had cut off and washed a lock of her hair, and given it to you for my poor mistress. This is a great relief to me, who ought to have seen that this was done, but I forgot everything in the sickness that came over me at that terrible sight."

"I have the lock of hair safe," replied I, fully resolved to substitute the ringlet cut by my own hand from the beautiful tresses of the departed Frances, for the coarse hair taken from the head of the corpse, which I had consigned to the fire the previous night. The kindness and attention I had shown to the nurse, had quite won her good will; but, alas! this circumstance tended rather to increase my painful sensations than to diminish them, for she, poor soul, was continually dwelling on the perfections, mental and bodily, of her lost young lady, and

relating anecdotes that awakened still more acutely my remorse and regret for having occasioned her death.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE funeral procession consisted of the hearse, with its white plumes, emblematical of the maiden state of her whose remains it was supposed to convey, and the coffin, the best that the town of Pendine could furnish, covered with a pall, reserved, as the undertaker took care to tell me, solely for the gentlefolk of the neighborhood who happened to die in the country, moved slowly along, preceded and followed by two mutes on horseback, and a mourning coach containing the nurse and myself.

The churchyard was filled by the rustic neighbors, all the women in tears, and the men with grave countenances. Not one of them had forgotten the fair creature, who, six months before, had moved in health and beauty among their cottages, with a kind word and sweet smile for all; and consequently the sight of the hearse, with its white plumes, and the coffin supposed to hold the remains of her they had so often admired, affected them all deeply. The season too—spring—that time of promise, when nature puts forth its buds, had made its appearance; and there is something so analogous between it and youth, that, when the young descend to the dark grave just as earth is bursting to give its verdure—when the song of birds enlivens the air, and gleams of sunshine warm it,—when the very showers are like the tears of joy with which we welcome a loved and long-absent friend, it increases the regret experienced.

Our worthy pastor, robed in his canonicals, and book in hand, met us at the entrance of the church. His face was pale, and his grey locks, moved by the breeze, added to the venerableness of his aspect.

The coffin was borne into the church by four of the most respected cottagers, and was followed by ten or twelve little girls, strewing the early flowers of spring on it, and singing a hymn taught them by the lovely and amiable girl, for whose death their tearful eyes and tremulous voices revealed their deep regret. These children had been the pupils of the two fair sisters, who devoted a certain portion of every day to their instruction, and were regarded by their scholars as little short of angelic beings.

My bride, alas! now a mourning one, was with her mother bitterly weeping in the church, having, contrary to the entreaties of the pastor, come to pay the last tribute of respect to her lamented sister. As I looked at her, my heart melted with tenderness; but that sacred yoke, and the solemn duty that called us there, was no place for fond greetings. I glanced, too, into the open vault, where, from the slanting sunbeams descending from a large window near it, I could perceive the coffin of my dear mother.

deposited there six months before. I shuddered at the thought that I was about to intrude into that sanctuary of my beloved dead, the body of an utter stranger, whose life and conduct might have been such as to have rendered this contact utterly disrespectful to my departed relatives; but it was now too late to reflect on this painful, but inevitable result of the deception I had foolishly, madly practised, a deception that had plunged my mother-in-law and wife into a renewal of the deep grief to which I was now an agonized witness, and which had destroyed the happiness of my bridal days. How did those pale faces and streaming eyes reproach me for that which was known only to my own guilty heart!

The sad ceremony over, I approached the two mourners, scarcely less depressed in spirits than themselves. I attempted not to offer any of the vain common-place phrases meant to console, for I knew their inutility. I merely pressed the cold and trembling hands held out to meet mine, and supporting the tottering steps of both, moved slowly from the church.

Who could have believed that it was only the morning of the previous day that I had left that sacred temple, elate with a joy so entire, so engrossing, as to banish the memory of the one terrible event that had given a color to my life ever since its occurrence? Yet, so it was, and now I felt as if I should never more experience such emotions. Alas! we are all the creatures of circumstance, and, with our vain and boasted dependence on self, can no more resist the unseen chain that yokes us to our destiny, than can the sand on the sea-shore remain stationary when the advancing and receding wave impels it along.

My poor Louisa was "so pale, so woe-begone," that one might have fancied that long sickness, as well as sorrow and ten additional years had been added to her age; and it was plainly to be seen that this last shock had so impaired the health of her mother, as to leave little hope of her long surviving it.

What a prospect for a youthful bridegroom! knowing too, as I did, how fond, how devoted was the affection entertained by my wife for her mother, the last surviving relative she had on earth. When we reached our home, my mother-in-law, anxious to learn every particular relative to her lost child, retired to her chamber to converse with the faithful nurse, and I was left alone with my bride. She arose, and bursting into a passionate fit of weeping, threw herself into my arms, and hid her streaming face on my breast. I kissed her beautiful tresses, and pressed her to my heart, as a fond mother might a weeping child. My very soul was filled with pity for her, and I should have despised and hated myself could I for one moment have ceased to respect her grief. The delicacy of my conduct moved her, and, relieved by my tender sympathy, she poured out her sorrow as confidently as an infant whispers its first grievance to a doting nurse.

"Can you forgive me, dearest," murmured she, "for bringing sorrow and trouble to our home, where I had hoped to have brought only love and peace? Alas! what a terrible task has

been imposed on you, and on our wedding-day too! I would fain question you whether my beloved sister retained, in death, any traces of that beauty for which she was so remarkable when in life, but I want courage yet to hear the fearful details. Oh! never shall I forget the part you have taken in our affliction. You who never saw her, who knew not what a pure and admirable creature she was."

How little did my poor Louisa know how well every feature of the dead was engraved on my memory; nay, more—how vividly her own lovely face recalled that of her lost sister to my mind.

"I could have wished, dearest," said she, "that you had brought me a ringlet of that dear hair which I so often plaited; but I suppose it was changed—spoiled," and she shuddered.

"I have brought one," replied I, "and if you desire it, I will at once bring it to you from my chamber, where I left it on entering."

I withdrew; and having taken the ringlet, now six months in my possession, from the box in which I had placed it on returning from the funeral; first having wetted, and then placed it in a napkin to dry, I returned with it to my poor Louisa. She pressed it repeatedly to her lips, bathed it with her tears, and thanked me repeatedly for having brought her this treasure.

"How little changed!" exclaimed she, contemplating its length and silken texture. "Ah! who could imagine that it had lain so many months in the water?"

While she was yet speaking, the nurse came to request my presence in my mother-in-law's chamber.

"I have told her, sir, of your having the lock of hair, and she desires so much to see it," said the good woman.

I took the ringlet, and placed it in the bereaved mother's hands, who implored blessings on my head for the good feeling I had shown through the whole of the painful business.

"Nurse has told me of all your kindness and thoughtfulness," said she. "Like your excellent mother, you can feel for, and lighten the affliction of others by your sympathy. May my daughter repay you tenfold for all the pain you have experienced the last two days on our account!"

It was piteous to see the doting mother contemplating this last relic of her departed child, her eyes dropping tears on it as she gazed. I did not attempt to check them, for I knew they would relieve her oppressed heart; but, by gentle means, I induced both mother and daughter to take some jelly, and a little wine and water: and when night came I led my poor Louisa to her chamber, at the door of which I pressed my lips on her brow, and, praying to God that sleep might restore her weakened frame, I took possession of a bed in my dressing-room, every feeling but that of pitying tenderness subdued in my breast.

The heartless voluptuary, who thinks only of his own enjoyment, regardless of the feelings of others, can never know the self-satisfaction I experienced when, the following morning, I saw the cheek of my bride assume a less pallid tint, was assured that she had slept several hours

during the night—and above all, perceived that the delicacy and tenderness I had evinced towards her sorrow were so truly appreciated, that her love for me, revealed by an artless and increased confidence, amply repaid me for the triumph achieved over every selfish feeling.

For days and weeks the gloom and sorrow impending over my home were uncheered, save by the tender, but pensive whispered words of affection exchanged between my bride and myself. Both felt that any evident demonstrations of the consolation we found in our mutual love, might appear unfeeling to the bereaved mother, on whose grief time seemed to produce little amelioration. Oh, what a deep well of tenderness lies buried in woman's heart! and how do its waters fall on the arid nature of man, refreshing and revigorating it! My whole being was changed beneath the sweet influence of my beautiful Louisa, at whose feet I was often tempted to prostrate myself, in gratitude for the possession of such a treasure. The long pent in springs of affection now gushed forth from my heart as the water did from the rock when touched by the wand of Moses; and my lovely—my loving wife, was the enchantress that wrought this miracle. By a glance, a single word, or a pressure of my hand, she could transport me to a state of bliss almost too great for words; and often did I steal from her presence, when her mother was with her, to conceal an exuberance of happiness that might have reminded her too forcibly of her own unmitigated sorrow. But my happiness was not without alloy. When was that of mortal ever free from it? And I, whose folly, whose madness, had wrought such misery to those dear to me—how could I expect that so rare, so blessed a visitant, could make a long sojourn with me? And yet some foolish expectation that my marriage with her I adored, would efface every care, every thought but of herself, from my mind, had beguiled me, and I was now to learn that though moments—nay, hours, of as pure happiness as ever man tasted, were accorded me, a spectre invoked by conscience, and seen only by me, would cross my path, would flit through my chamber, and sometimes haunt my couch, even when the beautiful and guileless head of my wife was resting on my heart, as she slumbered peacefully as an infant. It was true, her sweet voice, her expressions of tenderness, and her gentle smile, could exorcise for a time the spectre that haunted my memory; but alas! it would soon return, and silent and abstracted, I would sink into a gloomy reverie, from which I would start like one awakened from a painful dream, when my Louisa laid her hand on my brow and questioned me with fond anxiety on the cause of my moodiness.

## CHAPTER XVII.

How trifling are the incidents that can awaken a chain of thoughts which for days—aye, and for nights too, will pursue one! Sitting one day

by my Louisa in the chamber of my mother-in-law, and reading aloud to them, as was my wont, a sudden and piercing shriek from the former caused me to let fall the book, when I beheld my wife, pale as death, her eyes widely opened, and terror imprinted on every lineament, rushing wildly away. Her dead sister seemed again before me, just as she looked when, starting from slumber, she cast one glance of affright at me, and fled to meet the terrible death that in the next moment destroyed her. I arose, and cried out, "Stay! oh, in pity stay!" and rushed after her. I caught her in my arms, pressed her wildly to my heart, and she faintly laughed; but casting one look at me—the paleness of my face, and the terror imprinted on my countenance, soon checked the smile, and she exclaimed, "Good heavens! my beloved, what is—what can be the matter with you?"

I put my hand to my brow, and tried to speak, but such was my agitation, that for some time the power of articulating was denied me, and, loosening my grasp from Louisa, I sank trembling into a chair. My mother-in-law looked astonished, and my wife was perfectly agast. By degrees I recovered my self-possession; and becoming conscious of the necessity of an explanation, I said, "Your cry, Louisa, what caused it? I fancied you had been seized with some spasmodic attack, and—"

"You dear, dear love, in your alarm for me," observed my wife, "showed yourself almost as great a coward as your foolish Louisa." And she pressed her lips on my brow, on which cold drops, wrung from it by terror, were standing. "How foolish of me to have thus alarmed you, dearest!" resumed she, "but among other numerous follies, I have such a dread of mice, that the sight of one terrifies me to such a degree, that I lose all self-control. I saw a mouse run across the room; poor little animal, I dare say it was much more frightened than I was, and I screamed and ran away."

"Endeavor to conquer this nervousness, my dear," said my mother-in-law, herself deathly pale. "Your cry and your face were so precisely like hers," and here she burst into hysterical tears, "that I could have believed she stood before me; and it has shaken my nerves terribly."

"Forgive me, dearest mother, and you too, my beloved, for thus distressing you," answered Louisa, kissing her mother's cheek, and then mine; "I am so grieved to have agitated you both."

"My lost child had the same terror of mice," observed Mrs. Maitland, addressing me; "and her shriek, whenever she saw one of these poor little things, seemed to ring in my ears again when Louisa cried out. It may be only imagination; but ever since I lost my first-born, Louisa seems to grow so like her, that although the resemblance between them was always striking, it now appears more so than ever to me."

"Would to Heaven, dearest mother, that this increased resemblance could give you any comfort," replied my sweet wife; "but, alas! I fear it only pains you."

It was no wonder, then, that I was daily, hourly struck by this strong likeness—a like-

ness that was ever recalling to my memory an event that I would give worlds to forget, when the bereaved mother acknowledged its effects on hers!

For several days that shriek rang in my ears, haunted my dreams; and I have started from slumber in terror with the wild imagination that the dead Frances and the living Louisa were one and the same person, and about to be dashed down the steep precipice where the former met her death. Often did I awaken my sleeping wife by my startings and exclamations of terror, and she would question and endeavor to soothe me, accusing herself of having occasioned this nervousness by her childish alarm about the mouse, and thanking and blessing me for these proofs of my tenderness.

Little did she know what was passing in my breast, or how, fondly as I loved her, I shrank from her thanks for demonstrations of terror originating in a cause that I would rather die than reveal to her. I had looked on her sister but once, while she slumbered, calm and beautiful as a sleeping cherub, and during the brief moment that she started from the seat on which she had reclined, and staring wildly at me rushed away. It was, therefore, only while my wife slept, or when anything alarmed her, that the resemblance to the departed struck me so forcibly, and I dreaded to look on her at these times. But now a fresh incident, by enabling me to identify the likeness more strongly, increased my nervousness and misery, rendering me at certain moments almost a maniac. I had gone out to ride, urged by my wife, who thought that my illness, as she persisted in calling my fits of abstraction and startings at night, was occasioned by too much confinement within doors. I could not bear to leave her; and she, now almost constantly occupied in nursing her mother, whose ill health caused us both the greatest anxiety, could seldom accompany me. Having been absent a couple of hours, I returned, and entered my mother-in-law's chamber, when the first object that met my view was a portrait of *her* whose mortal remains were now mouldering in the grave to which I had consigned them. Taken by surprise, I uttered a cry, and raised my hands to my eyes to shut out the sight that had so violently agitated me, when drawn from the adjoining room to which they had retired to conceal their tears from me, as they had heard me enter the hall, both my wife and her mother hastened into the apartment.

"You are ill, dearest!" exclaimed Louisa; "I see you are, for you are pale as death. Where do you suffer?"

"Yes," observed her mother, "you are suffering severely I see. My dear son, where is your pain?"

"A sudden spasm at the heart," replied I, "to which I have long been subject. I am better now."

"Give him a little camphor julep, my dear," said Mrs. Maitland; "there is nothing so good for spasms."

I swallowed the camphor julep handed me by my alarmed wife, and to satisfy her, promised to have a bottle of it always within reach, in case of a return of the complaint; and having

recovered my self-control, I talked of my ride, carefully avoiding again to turn my eyes towards the side of the room where the picture was suspended.

"We have had a great surprise during your absence," observed my mother-in-law; "and although it has agitated and made us weep, it will, nevertheless, be, when we get more used to behold it, a consolation. You have not noticed the portrait," and she pointed to it. My eyes followed the direction, and it required a strong effort on my part to look on it without betraying the emotion it produced.

"Just a week before the illness of your dear mother," resumed Mrs. Maitland, "a travelling artist, passing through our neighborhood, attracted by its picturesque scenery, took up his abode in the little ale-house in the next hamlet. Struck by the appearance of my daughters he offered to paint their portraits, and your dear mother, wishing to possess them, my lost Frances gave him two or three sittings, when the indisposition of my dear friend put an end to her giving any further ones, all our time and thoughts being filled up in attending by the sick bed of our dear friend, and the artist went away, taking with him the unfinished sketch. When the terrible stroke which deprived us of my blessed child fell on us, I wished of all things to get the sketch, but we knew not the address of the painter. He, it appears by his letter, only returned from a long tour in the provinces a short time ago, and having finished the portrait, sent it down to me. It is a most striking resemblance, and when, during your ride, it arrived, I had it placed where it is now suspended, in order to have it constantly before me. Might it not, my dear son, pass for the portrait of our dear Louisa?"

I assented to the truth of the remark, as well I might, for never was there a more perfect resemblance.

And now for several hours in the day was that portrait placed before me. It seemed to possess the power attributed to the basilisk, for I could not turn my eyes from it, though the sight kept constantly alive in my breast the memory of an event that poisoned my existence, and which I would have given worlds to bury in oblivion. There were those dark and thoughtful eyes, that seemed to look into my very soul, for ever bent on me; and when I turned away to shun them, the dark and lustrous eyes of my wife met mine with an expression of such pensiveness and tenderness, that I have often been compelled to leave the chamber to conceal my emotion.

Every day increased our anxiety for the health of my mother-in-law, and confirmed my fears that she would not be long left to us. The consciousness that the loss of her daughter had dealt the death-blow to her life, was a fearful addition to the misery that poisoned mine; and as I saw the anxiety and wretchedness that took possession of my sweet and gentle Louisa, as she beheld her fondly loved mother, her last relative, fading away, I felt that I, on whom she showered the rich blessing of her affection, was the accursed cause of all her grief. I, I it was who had robbed her of a sister on whom

she doted, and who was now, by slow, but sure degrees, sending her mother to the grave.

The physicians called in to Mrs. Maitland held out no hope of her recovery. They pronounced her disease to be the result of anxiety and grief, and informed me that a few months must end her existence. Anxious to atone for my involuntary sin against her peace, and desirous to prove my tenderness for my wife, I devoted every hour to attendance on her dying mother. I read to her, I sat by her couch, endeavoring to beguile the long and weary hours of her confinement by every means that could suggest themselves to my anxious mind; and when she thanked and blessed me, and my adored Louisa, with her eyes filled with tears of gratitude, would tell me that never son had more thoughtfully or tenderly fulfilled his duties to a mother, I have truly whispered, that never could I do enough to prove my devotion to both her mother and herself.

And now hope was held out to me that I should, in a few months, be a father, but the joy this intelligence afforded was damped by the delicacy of my wife's health, and the precarious state of her mother. The unceasing attention required by Mrs. Maitland's increased weakness, added to her own situation, had been too much for my poor Louisa, whose pallid face and languor greatly alarmed me. I endeavored, and I believe with success, to minister to the comfort of both invalids; but, alas! the fiat had gone forth, and it became evident that a few days must terminate the existence of my excellent mother-in-law.

I had tried to prepare my dear Louisa for the sad event; and her dying mother, with a resignation and fortitude that proved her trust in the Almighty, exhorted her to bear, as a Christian should, this new trial. It was touching to behold and listen to these two admirable women as they spoke of that better, brighter world, to which one was hastening, and where the other hoped, when called hence, to join her: and when the hour of parting came, Mrs. Maitland sank on her pillow as a tired traveller sinks to rest, with her dying breath blessing her daughter and me, to whom, from the first hour of our meeting to the last of her life, she had evinced all the affection of a mother.

I will not dwell on the details of this sad event. In three weeks after the grave closed over Mrs. Maitland my beloved wife gave birth to a daughter; and this new claimant on her love, and the duties it imposed, I do believe saved her from the consequences of a grief that might have destroyed her delicate frame. You, my precious child, were welcomed with speechless but overflowing tenderness, and were baptized in tears, for those caused by a parent's loss often bathed your dear face, as your mother covered it with kisses. She expressed so strong a desire to nurse you, that although fearful that her strength was unequal to the task, I yielded an assent, but not until the doctor had assured me that this maternal occupation would prove the best remedy for her grief, nay, prevent her indulging it, from the knowledge that it would inevitably prove injurious to the *health of her infant*.

And when I beheld my sweet Louisa gradually recover her tranquillity as she watched, Madonna-like, over her child, on whose existence her own seemed to hang, I rejoiced that I had consented to her wishes, and felt my little daughter grow, if possible, dearer to me as I witnessed the consolation, the blessing, she proved to her dear mother. Far was I from imagining that the circumstance of her nursing her infant might eventually lead to exciting alarm, if not suspicion, in the mind of my wife; but, alas! so it was. Instead of allowing the little one to sleep with the attendant hired to wait on her, and who was, as the doctor recommended, to bring it to its mother once or twice during the night to receive its nurture, my wife would not consent to be separated from her nursing at night, and had a little cot placed by our bed-side, from which she could remove the baby at will. Her anxiety to supply it with its nurture kept her wakeful, previously an unusual thing with her, who was a very sound sleeper, and consequently my broken slumbers, my wild startings, and my incoherent ravings, which had become habitual to me ever since the terrible night that had deprived her of a sister, now first became known to her. Alarmed for my health, often did she awake, and, with pitying tenderness, question me. But I pleaded some disagreeable dream, or night-mare, to which I said I had been from my childhood subject, and she, though evidently uneasy, urged me no more; but when the doctor paid his next visit to her and her infant, she consulted him whether a remedy might not be found to prevent those uneasy slumbers. I happened to be in an adjoining room, whence I could hear all that passed.

"My dear husband," said she, "starts violently, utters half incoherent exclamations of falling down precipices, trembles, and, in short, when I awake him, appears in great agitation."

"I see, I see," said the doctor, a worthy man, but not a skilful physician, and whose prevailing weakness was to endeavor to conceal his professional ignorance by the use, or rather abuse, of technical terms, with the real signification of which he was not always acquainted. "I am disposed to think that Mr. Herbert's disease originates in a chronic derangement of the coronary or gastro-epiploic artery, probably caused by a pressure of the stomachic or hepatic plexus, acting on the cauda equina of the medulla spinalis, communicating with the pelvic viscera, and influencing the action of the pathetici nerves on the brain, the pia or dura mater of which being affected, sometimes leads to mischief."

Although annoyed that my infirmity should be exposed to Dr. Bellinden, I could not resist smiling as I listened to this incongruous medley of technical phrases, all so wholly misapplied as to prove his ignorance to any one at all acquainted with the terms.

"Good Heavens! Doctor, you alarm me beyond measure," observed my wife, her voice tremulous with emotion.

"You must not, my dear madam, suffer yourself to be alarmed. With my professional experience, I flatter myself I shall soon succeed in

removing the unpleasant symptoms you have named, and restore Mr. Herbert to his wonted health."

"Fool, fool," thought I, "thou canst not

'Minister to a mind diseased;  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow;  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain;  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart.'

## CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM the moment I became aware that I spoke in my sleep, and that the wakefulness of my wife enabled her to observe my nocturnal uneasiness, and to overhear my words, I was seized with a terror lest my terrible secret should be revealed to her, which, acting on my already deranged nerves, increased the danger I apprehended. Never did I sink into slumber without fear and trembling, lest I should utter something to betray myself. I have lain hour after hour in enforced wakefulness, watching, to be assured that she slept, before I dared resign myself to slumber, till, worn out by fatigue, my eye-lids have closed, and even in the short and fevered slumbers which followed these long hours of watchfulness, the dread of exposing my secret haunted me. I took the prescriptions of the doctor, but alas! as I had anticipated, derived no advantage from them. Mine was a malady of the mind acting on the body, and not a disease of the body operating on the mind; and I was well aware, that to attempt to ameliorate the effect without removing the cause, was a hopeless task. But as I dared not express this conviction, I yielded to the reiterated requests of my wife, and took the potions recommended.

On the death of her mother, my wife had the portrait of her sister removed to our general sitting-room, and there it was during the day, and long evenings, confronting me with its pensive eyes, and, as if endowed with some magical power, drawing mine continually towards them. I had asked my wife not to have the portrait placed in that room; but she pleaded so strongly that it might remain, that fearful of exciting suspicions that it was disagreeable to me,—for latterly, everything, however trifling, alarmed me on this point,—I let it be hung where she wished it; and thus, that image, which I would have given all I possessed to banish from my mind, was continually kept alive in it, by circumstances over which I could not exert a control, without betraying, or fancying that I betrayed, that I was actuated by some hidden motive.

I could now well comprehend how murderers, after having long escaped detection, have been so haunted by the recollection of their crimes, and having suffered such agonies by the dread of discovery, have, unable any longer to bear their misery, confessed the fact, and given themselves up to justice. Oh! could I have

found some friend to whom I could confide my terrible secret, perhaps I should have found relief. Perhaps a cool and impartial mind might have taught me to distinguish the difference between an accidental act of folly, followed by a dreadful catastrophe, the possibility of which could never have presented itself to my imagination, and one of premeditated guilt, for which I felt myself responsible. But with me the powers of discrimination and sober judgment were so impaired by constantly brooding over this one heart-rending event, entailing others so harrowing to my feelings, that I could no longer draw the line of distinction; and who dared I trust with the secret, that, like a canker, was preying on my life! nay, notwithstanding the blessings I still possessed, in a wife and child I adored, was rendering existence an almost insupportable burden.

I had believed, previously to my marriage, that once wedded to my Louisa, her presence and her affection would banish the one dark shadow that obscured the sunshine of my life. But I had been disappointed. She was more faultless, more attractive than my fondest hopes had ever painted her; she loved me as only the most worthy deserve to be loved, and had given me a child on whom I doted—and yet the one fatal event was still ever present to my mind—it haunted me by day—took possession of my pillow by night—nay, even in her arms, those pure and lovely arms, that had never clasped mortal save her mother and mine, her sister and our child, I was pursued by the recollection of the dead, hurled into eternity by my madness.

The doctor prescribed air and exercise, and my Louisa, to engage me to adopt his advice, would walk with me, endeavoring, by a thousand nameless loving wiles, known only to the gentler sex, and practised only by the most amiable and tenderest of it, to cheer my spirits, and chase away the moodiness, that had, by degrees, taken possession of me. A faint smile, or a tender pressure, repaid her exertions; but notwithstanding all her efforts, and my own, I soon relapsed again into abstraction. By a fatality, my wife always directed her steps to the scene, which, of all others, I wished most to avoid. She would pause to rest herself on the seat in the alcove, become as painful as it was memorable to me; and though I endeavored to induce her to avoid it, I never succeeded. Indeed, the only other picturesque walk in our neighborhood led to the church-yard, the sight of which never failed to renew my Louisa's sadness, and to awaken my own: so, the well-known path that led to the home of her youth, so often traversed with the dear and departed, became our frequent promenade in fine weather. But the frequency of my visits to it could not vanquish the repugnance, nay, more, the horror I felt at approaching it. I have seen my wife, when she thought herself unobserved, examining me with a mixture of anxiety and fear in her countenance, whenever I betrayed any of the symptoms of repugnance to certain places and things, which, in spite of all my efforts to conceal, I did not always succeed in doing. This discovery alarmed and distressed

me. A thousand vague but tormenting fears began to haunt me, and my constraints and uneasiness in her presence became consequently increased. Sometimes I fancied that possibly I had, when talking in my sleep, divulged enough of my terrible secret to excite her suspicions, and that she purposely led me to the alcove, in order to try how far I could support the sight of it.

But it were bootless to recapitulate all the wild and wayward fancies that took possession of my excited brain; suffice it to say, that there were moments when I suspected my own reason, so wholly had one thought engrossed all my mind, becoming nothing short of monomania. And yet, while doubting my own sanity, it never once occurred to me, that a similar doubt may have arisen in the mind of my wife.

My health began to give way beneath the continual anxiety under which my mind labored. Sleep fled my couch, and I regretted it not, because its absence assured me an immunity from revealing my secret to my wife, and it was only after she arose in the morning, that, after requesting that no one might enter my chamber, I resigned myself to slumber free from alarm. My appetite was gone,—my body became emaciated, and my spirits were so depressed, that I would sit for whole hours speechless, absorbed in a deep reverie, from which I would start in alarm, if suddenly addressed. The tenderness of Louisa often brought tears to my eyes; but alas! brought no happiness to my heart. Fondly, truly as I loved her, I began to regard her as a spy whom I dreaded; and though I felt it would be torture to tear myself away from her, I was more than half disposed to do so, for the sake of being released from the constraint her presence imposed. She would place our child in my arms, and teach the little creature to clap hands at my approach, and to present its dear red lips for a kiss from mine, and for a few brief minutes I would forget my misery, and feel happy. But then she would remark the striking resemblance the child bore to her departed sister, and ask me to look on the portrait I dreaded to behold, in order to judge of it, and then I would return the little girl to her arms, leave the room suddenly, and rush into the open air, almost like a maniac, until recalled to a sense of the suspicions to which such conduct was likely to give rise, when compelling myself to assume a tranquil air, I would return to the house, seek my wife, and converse on some indifferent topic. I now began to dread the presence of my child, because its dear mother continually reverted to the likeness it bore to her sister.

"No consolation, no pleasure, remains free to me," would I say, "without being destroyed by some reference to the one terrible subject, that once touched upon, produces such agony in my soul. Better, thought I, stand alone in the world, deprived of wife and child, than be thus tortured. Fain would I visit some far distant region, where the sound of that name I wished for ever buried in oblivion, could never be heard. Oh! how far preferable would it be than to live in perpetual terror of betraying a secret which was kept for ever alive in my memory by the

frequent recurrence to the one fatal subject connected with it. But how summon resolution sufficient to fly from my Louisa—from our child? Would not she, my better half, my guardian angel, whose unchanging love was my sole blessing, pine, perhaps die, if I deserted her and our infant? Oh no! I could not leave her. Life would be insupportable without her,—and at the bare idea of inflicting sorrow on her, my own suffering seemed as naught in the balance."

I had one day been out a considerable time, when, entering suddenly, I found the doctor with my wife. I had lately noticed that his visits were much more frequent than formerly, which had somewhat alarmed me, from the suspicion that they were in some way connected with me. Was it possible that my wife had revealed to him the observations she might have made on the incoherence of my manner and conduct, when consulting him about my broken health? Both appeared confused and annoyed by my sudden entrance. Unpractised in deception, my poor Louisa could not conceal her embarrassment; and though the doctor affected to continue the conversation, it became evident to me that he had chosen a fresh topic.

"By-the-by; Mr. Herbert," said he, after one of those awkward pauses in our discourse which denote that none of the persons engaged in it were at their ease, "I don't think you are looking better. I suspect that our mountain air, though in general considered so healthy, is too keen for you, and that not only your health, but that also of Mrs. Herbert, would be greatly benefited by a change. Suppose you travel. Move about from place to place for some time. Be assured you will derive great advantage from such a step, and I shall have the pleasure of seeing you return with renovated health."

"I should like it exceedingly," observed my wife, "for I think it would do us all good. What say you, dearest?"

"If you wish for change," replied I, coldly, "I can have no objection; but I thought that you liked retirement, and preferred our home to all other places."

There was something reproachful in these words, as well as in the tone in which they were uttered; and Louisa's sensitive mind felt it, for she blushed deeply, and then turned very pale.

"It is very true I *do* like retirement, and prefer home to all other places," observed she, mildly; "but when health requires a change, I am ready to adopt the doctor's advice."

"I was not aware that you were in delicate health," said I. "Why did you not sooner inform me on a point in which I take so deep an interest?"

"Delicate health is perhaps too strong a term," replied Louisa, blushing deeply; "but occasionally I feel a little unwell. I have had great trials you know, in the loss of those so dear to me;" and tears started to her eyes.

"Always a reproach," thought I; and this unjust thought made my manner harsh, if not unfeeling.

"No one is exempt from such trials," observ-

ed I, "and those who love, or consult the happiness of the living, do not devote themselves wholly to a morbid grief for the dead."

No sooner had I uttered this unjust remark, than I felt sorry for it, but the presence of Dr. Bellinden prevented me from expressing my regret. Louisa turned very pale, but made no reply, and the Doctor observing the change in her countenance, said, "that although Mrs. Herbert made light of her occasional illness, it was his positive opinion, that unless change of air was immediately resorted to, her health would inevitably become seriously endangered. Seek the milder climate of Devonshire," added he. "It will be advantageous to you both, as well as to the child, and let this advice be followed with as little delay as possible."

### CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN, after dinner that day, my moodiness still continued notwithstanding the sweet and feminine efforts of Louisa to draw me from it, she, her face assuming a paler hue, and those deep thoughtful eyes timidly turned to mine, thus timidly addressed me—

"Dearest, as far as I can judge by your manner, it appears that you do not wish to leave our home. If this be the case, pray do not bestow a second thought on the counsel of Dr. Bellinden. My health, though perhaps a little affected by the sad events of the last year and a half, is not sufficiently deranged to render a removal from this place absolutely necessary, so do not adopt any plan not quite agreeable to you on my account."

"Are you sure, Louisa," and I looked full in her face while I spoke, "it was *your* health that induced Dr. Bellinden to advise our removal from home?"

"I believe my health had a considerable influence in the advice," replied she, her rising color betraying that she felt conscious of the suspicion I entertained.

"Had you no conversation with him on mine?" asked I, almost sternly.

"Yes, certainly, certainly," replied she; "I spoke to him, for I was alarmed, my dear Marmaduke," and she walked gently up to me and pressed her lips on my fevered brow, "at observing your total want of appetite, your loss of sleep, your lowness of spirits, and wished Dr. Bellinden to prescribe something that might be beneficial to your health."

"Then why not tell me your intention of consulting him?" demanded I, angrily. "Am I such a child as not to be made acquainted with your thoughts, and plans, and more especially in a case so closely concerning myself?"

"My not having told you, originated in a well-meant, though perhaps a mistaken tenderness," said she, her voice tremulous with emotion. "I thought you might object to my consulting a doctor, as nervous persons frequently do, and—"

"So I am nervous, am I?" interrupted I rude-

ly, "and am to be treated either as a hypochondriac or a maniac."

"Oh! how you mistake and pain me," replied she, bursting into tears. "I believed that the sad, sad scenes you had witnessed since you came here, the grief you more than witnessed, for your kind heart and affection for me made you a true sharer in it, had affected your health and spirits. Could I then be indifferent to a state of health induced by your tenderness to me? Ah! no. It has sunk into my heart, and increased tenfold my affection. I have lost all but you and our child; but *you, you and it*, are all in all to me. Can I then be otherwise than most anxious about your health; and dreading to weary you on a subject always disagreeable to those in delicate health, and more especially to persons who are nervous?"

"Nervous, nervous," reiterated I, impatiently; forgetting, in the irritation produced by that word, the softness into which my feelings were relenting, as I listened to her sweet voice, and simple attempt to exculpate herself from my unjust suspicions. "Nervousness is but another name for a state of mind bordering on insanity; and you cannot suppose that it can be otherwise than most painful and humiliating to me to have a physician led to believe that such is my case?"

My wife looked at me with undissembled alarm; the excitement of my manner, the flushing of my countenance, and the anger I could not conceal, might well have confirmed a suspicion of my insanity, had such ever crossed her mind.

"I am not mad," resumed I, my anger increasing as I witnessed her alarm; "but I may be rendered so, if treated as a maniac. You, the wife of my bosom, the mother of my child, should have concealed the terrible infirmity you suspected, instead of confiding your fears to another."

"You cannot surely be serious in this charge?" said my poor Louisa; looking pale as marble, and fixing her eyes anxiously on my face. "No, no, you cannot think so ill of me?" and she burst into a passion of tears.

The truthfulness of her manner, and the guileless expression of her countenance, restored my confidence; and ashamed of my conduct, I pressed her to my heart, and implored her forgiveness for my injustice and harshness. How soon was her pardon accorded me, and how gently, how soothingly did she pronounce it!

"But," observed she, "this interview proves to me that change of scene is absolutely necessary to us both. Our feelings have grown into a morbidness, that requires our thoughts to be diverted from ourselves,—from our grief; and you will best prove your restored confidence in me by yielding to Dr. Bellinden's advice, and putting it into execution as soon as possible."

There was no resisting the wishes of my sweet Louisa, and in two days after we left Llandover. Every milestone that marked our increased distance from home seemed to remove a weight from my spirits; and my wife, marking the change with delight, became more cheerful than I had ever previously seen her.



Every turn in the road presenting a fine prospect, called forth expressions of pleasure from her; and like a child recently from school, every novel object gratified her. It is true, in the midst of her enjoyment, a sigh would escape from her breast, and a pensive shade steal over her beautiful face, and she would lay her hand on mine, look up tenderly in my face, and say, "Oh, why is it that happiness like mine should have one alloy? Enchanted with the charming scenery we are travelling through, blessed, dearest, with you and our child, I should be the happiest of mortals if the thought of how those dearly beloved ones, laid in the grave, would have enjoyed all that now delights me, had they been spared me." And her mild eyes would fill with tears, as she leant her head on my shoulder. And I instead of wiping away those tears, and pressing her to my heart, would remain silent, and careless of her renewed regret, absorbed by my own selfish annoyance at her having unconsciously awakened a train of painful thought, when I had undertaken this journey to avoid.

Often have I noticed Louisa's lips open to address me, her countenance beaming with a tender expression, which denoted that her thoughts were of the past; when she would seem to remember something, close them suddenly, sigh deeply, and sink into a reverie. Well did I divine what was passing in her mind, and rapidly did it recall that which I would give worlds to forget. But instead of feeling grateful for her self-control in not uttering what she feared might give me pain, I felt offended at what I considered her want of confidence, and blamed that which my own conduct had occasioned. "What!" thought I, "have I gained by her forbearance in not touching on certain subjects, if her countenance reveals, as plainly as words could do, that she is continually thinking of them, and thus keeps them ever before me?" There are few things, if any, more destructive to conjugal happiness than one prohibited subject of conversation. It invariably produces a constraint that chills all the pleasure of that confidential *causerie* which forms one of the sources of domestic enjoyment. The consciousness that there is a topic that must be avoided, keeps that identical one more constantly in the mind than others, and begets reserve and timidity.

I sometimes wondered what notions Louisa had formed of the cause of my annoyance when she had referred to her lost relations; for that she had discovered that the reference to them inflicted pain on me, I could not doubt, so carefully had she of late avoided touching on them. Had she heard me utter anything in my sleep that betrayed my feelings, or did she consider me so wholly selfish that I could not bear to be reminded of painful regrets? The first surmise alarmed, the second offended me, and then came a third that did both. Did she really think me insane, and dread exciting me by reverting to the sad events of the last year and a half? Alas! did not these morbid suspicions, this monomania, which kept the mind continually fixed on one point, prove that, if not quite in-

sane, I bordered closely on insanity? and as this reflection passed through my brain, I became overwhelmed with terror.

At one of the inns where we stopped for the night on our journey, Louisa happened to take up a newspaper, and began, thinking it might amuse me, to read portions of it aloud: my eyes were unconsciously fixed on her face, while hers were bent on the paper, when, after reading two or three paragraphs, I saw her shudder and lay down the journal.

"What has affected you, dearest?" inquired I; "and why do you not read on?"

"I dislike perusing painful subjects, and especially at night," replied she, "for they are apt to haunt one in sleep."

"What was the painful subject you met with?" asked I.

"Something very dreadful. A man, for many years esteemed and respected by his neighbors, and beloved by his family, has been arrested for a murder committed many years ago. The body of his victim, which he buried in a deep pit in the neighborhood of his dwelling, has been discovered; and a shirt-pin, bearing his crest and initials, found in the pit, has led to his being accused of the crime, and arrested."

I felt the blood rush to my head; my brain seemed to burn; my eyes could scarcely discern surrounding objects; and my heart beat so tumultuously, that I fancied its throbbings must be audible to my wife, as I listened to her words. I did not attempt to speak, for I was conscious that such an effort must inevitably betray my deep emotion; but I gasped for breath, and sank back on the sofa on which I had been seated.

"Good Heavens! you are ill—very ill!" exclaimed my wife, rushing to my assistance, and loosening my neck-cloth. She held to my lips a glass of water, snatched from the table. I drank a few drops of it, but not without great difficulty, for the power of swallowing seemed impaired.

"Where do you suffer? what is it you feel?" demanded my wife, her face expressive of the deepest alarm and anxiety.

"Only an attack of my old complaint, spasms at the heart," replied I, in broken words, "but they have passed away now, and I am nearly well."

"Heaven be praised!" murmured she, pressing me fondly to her heart; "but indeed, my beloved, these sudden attacks are very alarming; and you must—yes, indeed you must, consult some clever physician for a remedy."

She watched every change in my face with a tender anxiety that could not be counterfeited; pressed her cool hand to my burning brow, on which it fell, refreshing it like the breath of evening coming after a sultry day; sent to the apothecary of the little town for a bottle of camphor julep, and lavished on me all those tender attentions which only women, and intelligent, affectionate ones, can bestow on the object of their love, without being fussy or obtrusive.

Happy, thrice happy, may he consider himself, whatever be his trials, who is blessed with the affection of a pure and gentle woman; if it forms not a shield to guard him against the

assaults of misfortune, it at least furnishes a salve to heal the wounds inflicted by it. This salve, this blessing, was mine; but in the ingratitude which ever forms one of the peculiar characteristics of selfishness, and in the engrossment of all my faculties in the one absorbing thought that haunted me, I prized not the blessing lent me by Providence until I had lost it, and live to mourn, with a never-dying repentance, my blindness, my ingratitude. Well and truly has it been said, that the misfortunes brought on us by our own follies are precisely those most difficult to be borne, for self-reproach adds bitterness to them.

## CHAPTER XX.

WILL it be believed, that even while yet conscious of the tender care lavished on me,—while listening to the low, gentle, sweet voice, uttering only words of affectionate anxiety for my health, I could not divest myself of a suspicion that my wife either doubted my sanity, or suspected that some guilty secret was connected with what she termed my nervousness? Yes, that pure, that noble mind, incapable of suspicion, I dared to doubt. Why did she avoid reading aloud the paragraph that had so violently agitated me? She surely must have had some motives for it! And I conjured up various ones, *all* most alarming to me, and unjust to her, to account for so simple a circumstance as her not wishing to read a painful detail, and which she explained with a candor that would have satisfied any one with feelings less morbid, and a mind less suspicious than mine, that she was actuated by no other motive than the natural one assigned. I asked myself whether it could be possible that my sudden illness on her reading the paragraph aloud could have escaped her notice, or could have failed to awaken suspicion of its being the cause? and conscience whispered it must be so. Truly has it been said, that “a guilty conscience needs no accuser.” Mine was ever on the alert to take alarm, and reason strove in vain to subdue the fears conjured up by imagination.

I dreaded to resign myself to slumber that night, lest I should betray what was passing in my mind, and so confirm the suspicions that I believed my wife must entertain; but I could make no excuse for not seeking my pillow when the usual hour of rest arrived, though Heaven knows, I trembled at the bare notion. Long did I resist the influence of drowsiness, but at length sleep stole on me. I dreamt that my wife held the newspaper in her hand, and was again reading aloud the paragraph that had so much excited me, occasionally withdrawing her eyes from the paper to watch the effect of the statement on me. I felt her eyes fixed on my face, not with their usual mild and tender expression, but with a cold and keen examination, that chilled my blood. From the fond wife, she seemed metamorphosed into the stern accuser, the inexorable judge. Her

glance seemed to possess the fatal power of the basilisk, for, turn wherever I might, it still pursued me, till, maddened, I started from slumber, exclaiming, “Hide me, hide me from those eyes; they pierce my brain, they destroy me!”

“My love, my husband, it is I, your own Louisa,” said my wife, clasping me in her arms, as with distended eyelids, and gasping for breath, I sat up, trembling, and pale as death. “You are ill, very ill, dearest,” resumed she, looking anxiously in my face.

“No, only a nightmare,” said I, recovering from my terror. “What did I say in my sleep? Were you asleep, or did I awake you?”

“I was awake,” replied my wife.

“Aye, always awake,” thought I. “She never sleeps, but keeps constant vigil, to overhear my wild ravings, to verify her suspicions. Oh, this is intolerable!”

“You have not told me what I said in my sleep?” demanded I.

“Why think of it, dearest?” replied she.

“But why not tell me?” asked I, eagerly.

“You muttered something about hiding you, and of some one’s eyes destroying you, and were starting from bed when I held you back and awoke you.”

I drew a deep breath, and after a brief pause said, “Yes, I now remember, my dream of nightmare was, of some creature with eyes darting fire into my brain!”

“You must not drink tea or coffee at night, my love,” said my wife, “for I am sure both are injurious to your health, and impair your rest.”

I slept no more that night, and when I heard the soft breathing of my Louisa, calm and peaceful as that of our slumbering child by her side, I blessed God for this proof that her mind was not disturbed by suspicions which my agitated awakening and incoherent exclamations were so calculated to excite. And as I lay awake, counting the tedious hours told by a neighboring clock, the recollection of the paragraph in the newspaper again and again presented itself to my mind.

Here was an instance of a body, interred for many years, being at last discovered, and the murderer pointed out by a shirt-pin. Perhaps the owner of the pin might have been guiltless of the crime. Nevertheless, the evidence of that pin must affix the guilt on him, and I shuddered at the possibility that when I consigned the remains of my wife’s sister to her unhallowed grave, some proof of my having done so might have been interred with them. I tried to remember whether I had missed anything from my person—whether there was a chance of dropping any article, however small, that could serve to identify me; but although, after a long scrutiny, I could remember that previous to going to the cavern I had removed from my person the few ornaments I wore, I could not conquer the dread, that, unknown to me, some evidence might yet exist that I had buried the dead. Then, had not the remains found in the deep pit where they had lain so many years been at last discovered? Had not he who laid them there, like me, calculated that they never would be detected?

Why, then, should I count so securely on the eternal concealment of the remains interred in the cavern? Might not some idle boys, less timid than the generality, find out the spot? Might not robbers, in seeking a place of concealment for plunder, discover it; and some difference of the color in the sand, leading to suspicion of hidden booty, tempt them to dig the spot, and find the mouldering remains.

I now recollected with alarm, that I had never seen the cavern by daylight, so that a difference in the color of the earth where it had been dug *might* betray cause for suspicion, and lead to discovery. All this, though not probable, was yet within the bounds of possibility, and I shuddered while I acknowledged it to myself. Why had I not again visited the cavern by daylight, before I left home, and ascertained what now filled me with such alarm? This would have been a wise precaution; but no, fool, madman that I was, I blindly counted on safety, when a future day might prove how falsely I had reckoned.

Then would reason, for a brief period, assert its power, and whisper that even should the remains be found during my life, what evidence could point me out as being at all connected with their interment. Nay, could it not be made apparent by the testimony of several persons, that I had never seen the only individual missing from the time of my arrival in the country, that person being my sister-in-law, whose body was found in the river, and afterwards interred? But ingenious in self-torturing, came the thought, that if the remains should happen to be found before the dress was wholly destroyed, would it not immediately be recognised by the nurse and other servants so well acquainted with the dead? Yes, it certainly would, and I, thoughtless, and madly confiding in the notion that the spot would never be found out, had not made away with them! Indeed a thought of doing so never once entered my head; and if it had, I would have shrunk from the task; for, to profane the person of that fair creature by disrobing her, would *then* have appeared nothing short of sacrilege in my eyes; while now, with the terror of the chance of discovery, banishing every other thought but that of self-preservation, I believe I could have nerves to fulfil the fearful task, rather than suffer the dread that now had taken possession of me, awakened by the paragraph in the newspaper.

I writhed in inexpressible torture as these thoughts passed through my mind. And there, tranquilly sleeping, lay my wife, little dreaming that the person dearest to her in life, save our child, was enduring a mental agony that she would not have wished the most guilty to suffer—an agony that must never be revealed—and for which even her tenderness had no balm. There were moments when, my feelings excited to madness, I have gazed on her face as she slumbered, until its extraordinary resemblance to that of her departed sister almost led me to the belief that I now gazed on *her*. So did the face of the lovely dead look, when, as *the bright moon* shone on it, I contemplated, in *an agony of grief and remorse*, its wondrous

beauty. Never could I now behold my wife, without being struck by the strong resemblance which, keeping ever alive the memory of the one fatal event, embittered a life that might, without it, have been blest as was ever that of mortal. My child, too, was strikingly like her mother, and, consequently, greatly resembled her aunt; and frequently would my wife remark on this likeness, and press her little girl to her breast fondly, as if the resemblance to her lost sister rendered the child more dear to her: while, Heaven knows, it proved a fresh source of pain to me.

And now, by slow journeys, we had reached our destination, which was Torquay, in Devonshire. We had both heard much of its salubrity, and the beauty of its scenery; nor were our expectations of the latter disappointed, for my Louisa was delighted with the beautiful villas in the vicinity, and the fine prospects they commanded; while my moodiness seemed to fade away before the influence of the mild climate, and fine natural productions it called into life.

Gratified by the improvement in my spirits, Louisa expressed a wish that we should hire one of the pretty villas, embosomed in trees, that had so strongly excited our admiration; and after a few days passed at the inn, we took possession of it.

Busied in forming our little establishment, the first week left no time for the indulgence of those gloomy reveries which had, for nearly the last two years, become habitual to me; and my wife, with all the natural buoyancy of her character, before grief and anxiety had clouded it, began to resume the smiles that added such attraction to her fair and delicate face, while I marked the change with a pleasure long a stranger to my breast. And yet, there were moments when it struck me, that these smiles were forced, the better to conceal from me the anxiety to which my strange conduct must have given birth; so ingenious is suspicion in self-torturing, and so prone was I to see everything through the distorted medium of my fears.

Our child, too, grew daily more rosy and playful. Often would its dear mother place her on my knee, and the child would nestle her little head in my bosom, or smile in my face, or pat my cheeks with her little dimpled fingers. At such moments, I forgot my chagrin, and felt happy; but, alas! these gleams of joy were but of brief duration. Some unfortunate allusion to the past, inadvertently made by my wife, would, in a moment, put all my happiness to flight, and leave me, if possible, more moody than before, by the sudden contrast to my late feelings.

My wife, always an early riser, was accustomed to walk out in the morning while I slept, accompanied by the nurse-maid and her child. She spoke of having met a very interesting lady, similarly accompanied, who had taken great notice of our little girl. This lady, after meeting my wife a few times, stopped the nurse-maid, and asked permission to kiss our child; inquired its age, which happened to be nearly the same as that of hers, who was not so large; commended the beauty of our little one, which was a direct road to the fond mother's

heart; and, in short, an acquaintance had sprung up between the two youthful mothers, who met generally every morning in their walks, and, finding a sympathy in their tastes, took a mutual fancy to each other. Seeing that their meeting gave pleasure to my Louisa, I had not the courage to express my dislike to her forming an intimacy with a total stranger, of whom we knew nothing, except that she lived in one of the villas in our neighborhood, was pretty, lady-like, doted on her child, and greatly admired ours.

Her husband was absent—their first parting, as she told Louisa; and she expressed so much regret at their temporary separation, and such a desire for his return, as to convince Louisa that her new acquaintance was as fond a wife as a mother. This was an additional attraction in her eyes. A fond wife and mother must be amiable, and there *could* be no reason why she should not cultivate an intimacy, which every interview served to ripen into friendship.

Speaking of her one day in terms of high commendation, she expressed a wish, if I had no objection, to invite her to spend an evening with us.

"If you have set your heart on it," replied I, "and if my society is so irksome to you as to render the presence of this new acquaintance so very desirable, I will make no objection; though I confess I have a great dislike to female friendships, and more especially to those formed by chance, and with a perfect stranger."

My wife blushed, and a shade of disappointment passed over her expressive face.

"Let us think no more of it, dearest," was her gentle reply. "My new friend—"

And here she paused and blushed again, substituting acquaintance for friend, which she half uttered.

"My acquaintance is so agreeable, so artless, and so good-natured, that I thought her society might amuse and interest you, as well as me, or I should not have proposed engaging her."

"I require no society but yours," answered I coldly; "and I had hoped mine would be sufficient for your happiness."

There was more of reproach than tenderness in the manner in which I uttered these words; and she felt it, for she turned pale, and her eyes filled with tears, which she tried to conceal.

"What, tears!" exclaimed I sternly. "Pray wipe them away, and at once write to your new friend to come here. Put my feelings out of the question, for I should be sorry that they interfered with your happiness."

"Happiness is a strong word," said my wife, gravely. "That blessing depends wholly on you and our child, and has nothing to do with any one else."

"Nevertheless, you shed tears when I expressed my dislike to your forming an intimacy with a woman who, ten days ago, was a perfect stranger to you."

"Indeed, you mistake my feelings," observed my wife. "It was the coldness, may I add the sternness of your manner, so unusual, that moved me. You are right, I dare say. You know so much more of the world than I do, who have

passed all my life in solitude. Nay, smile not at my simplicity, when I confess that it never occurred to me to inquire the name of my new friend—that is, my new acquaintance, and that if I obeyed your commands to write an invitation to her, I should not know how to direct the note."

Far from being disarmed by this *naïve* confession, which ought to have brought me to her feet, to solicit her pardon for having for a moment pained her, I delivered a lecture, more resembling that of a harsh pedagogue to his pupil than an advice from a fond husband to his wife, on the imprudence of forming acquaintance with persons whose characters, nay, whose very names, were unknown, and who might, under the most captivating exteriors, conceal the most reprehensible qualities.

"Be assured I shall never again fall into the error of forming any acquaintance unknown to you," observed my wife. "But pray do not imagine, inexperienced as I acknowledged myself to be, that with regard to my own sex I could be deceived so far as to mistake an artful or designing woman for an innocent and amiable one; and I feel as convinced that this lady is in every way worthy, as if I had known her for years."

## CHAPTER XXI.

ALTHOUGH the warmth with which Louisa vouched for the worthiness of her new friend annoyed me, I could not resist admiring the purity of mind which, judging others by a self-knowledge, endowed all with whom she was brought in contact with some portion of the goodness with which she herself was so richly gifted.

The following morning my Louisa did not take her accustomed walk, and her cheeks looked the paler for the omission. I told her that this was wrong, and requested she would not forego an innocent pleasure. The truth is, that after a few hours' communing with myself, I became sensible of the unreasonableness of thwarting her desires, and anxious to atone for the formal lecture of the previous day.

While we were yet conversing on the subject a double knock at the door was heard, and a servant announced that a lady wished to see his mistress.

The new acquaintance of my wife entered ere he had time to conduct her to our sitting-room, and as cordially shaking hands with Louisa as if they had been friends for years, explained that, fearing my wife's absence had been occasioned by illness, she had called to inquire after her health. "I should have sent," added the stranger, and she laughed joyously while she spoke, "but I did not know your name." Is it not romantic and delightful, that we should have become friends, yes, absolutely friends, without ever inquiring each other's names? and then she laughed again, with that child-like gaiety which is so captivating in the young and handsome.

"This is my husband," said my wife, still holding the hand of the stranger, and leading her to the sofa, on which she seated herself with all the ease of manner of an *habitué*. She was singularly beautiful, possessed a most interesting countenance, with lively, but gentle manners. When looking from one to the other of these two fair and youthful matrons, both still in the flower of youth, I could not help thinking they were formed to be friends. The same artlessness and gentleness characterized both; but the cheerfulness of the stranger, probably from her never having endured any trials, was more constant and joyous than that of Louisa. Her gaiety was infectious. It was like a sunbeam, diffusing light and pleasure around her.

"Now you have made me acquainted with your husband, I hope soon to make you acquainted with mine," said the stranger: "though by the way, you have not told me his name." And she laughed again. "But what's in a name?" resumed she; "'the rose (continuing the quotation) by any other name would smell as sweet.' The ugliest name in the world could not impair the effect you produce," and she looked fondly at my wife; "and yet, somehow or other, I am sure yours must be a pretty name."

"It is"—Herbert, my wife was on the point of uttering; but the stranger, gracefully placing her beautiful little hand on her lips, exclaimed, "No, no, you must not tell me; I would not for anything destroy the romance of our acquaintance. It will be so delightful to tell my husband (who, *entre nous*, be it said, spoils me dreadfully) that the friend—for, mind, I insist on our being as dear friends as if we had quarrelled through our childhood, as most female friends have done—the friend, I say, whom I most love, does not know my name, and I am ignorant of hers. And then I'll bring him here, and you too will, I am convinced, become friends with him at once, for he is the dearest, best of human beings, and never committed a fault, unless it may be the having chosen such a little madcap as me for his wife." And her joyous laugh again echoed in the room.

It was impossible to resist the winning manners, the artless smiles, and the friendliness of this fascinating being. Even my moodiness gave way before her, and Louisa's gaiety returned.

"Now let me see your beautiful little girl," said she.

"The child was brought in, and instantly recognised the lady, who took it on her knee, called it by a hundred endearing names, played with it until the child laughed and uttered various sounds of joy, and suffered itself to be kissed and played with, to the infinite satisfaction of the fair stranger, as well as its own.

"I must bring my little girl to visit this darling to-morrow," said she. "How I wish she was only half as pretty as yours. But I must not be dissatisfied, for my Matilda is a dear good pet, and so sweet tempered. You and I shall sit nursing together, *n'est-ce pas*? like the mothers of Paul and Virginia. What a pity that one of our treasures is not a boy, for then they

would be sure to fall in love with each other hereafter. See how grave your husband looks. I am sure he thinks me half mad. Don't you?" and she turned her beaming face towards me as if we had been old friends.

"No, not mad," replied I, with something like an attempt at gallantry, "but calculated to make others so."

"That is a very suspicious compliment; is it not, my dear friend?" remarked she to my wife.

"He never pays compliments," was the answer.

"So much the worse, for now it is clear he thinks that I am likely to drive my husband mad. But don't think any such thing, grave sir, for he likes my foolish ways, and says he hopes I may remain a child until I play with my grandchildren. But, bless me, only look at the time-piece. What an unconscionable visit I have paid you! You will probably never let me in again," and she put on a contrite look.

My wife and I both assured her that her visit had given us unfeigned pleasure.

"Well, then, may I renew it this evening?" asked she; "I am so solitary when my darling is put to bed, that I fall into low spirits, and grow unreasonable and impatient for my husband's return, although I know he will come to me the moment he can. My poor eyes suffer when I read long by candlelight, and as he always reads aloud to me in the evening, I am without resource in his absence. Never did he leave me before, and never will I suffer his absence again. You'll let me come, won't you?"

And she bade us an affectionate adieu, and went away, leaving us charmed with her.

The third evening from the first she had spent with us, the fair stranger, my wife, and I, were chatting together on as cordial terms as if we had known each other all our lives. She began forming plans for the excursions we were to make together when her husband arrived, of the visit we were to make them at their seat in Yorkshire, she clapping her pretty little hands together with child-like glee at the pleasure she anticipated, when her servant arrived with a note for her. She hurriedly opened it, blushed to her very temples as she perused it, and arose to depart.

"My husband is arrived," said she, "and instead of coming for me, as I left word he was to do, he makes some foolish excuse, and begs me to return home as soon as possible. I shall certainly give him a severe scolding for his disobedience of my commands; that is, if I can restrain my joy at seeing him sufficiently to scold. Really, men are insupportable, are they not, *chère amie*?" turning to my wife, as she tied on her bonnet, and wrapped herself in her shawl. "My tyrant," resumed she, "will soon become as unmanageable as yours, if I don't assert my dignity. Look there, read his absurd note;" and she threw it to me, as, after having embraced Louisa, she hastily left the room, declining my offer to conduct her to her home.

"What does the husband of our charming friend say?" inquired Louisa, as, leaning on my shoulder, she glanced over the contents of the note which I had begun reading. They were as follows:—

"I am this moment arrived, and, impatient as I am to see you, I cannot, for reasons which I will give you when we meet, go for you, as you wished me to do, to Mr. Herbert's."

"You see that, although you don't know it, I am already acquainted with the name of your new friends, which I learned from one of our servants, when I inquired where you were. But more of this hereafter."

"Your fond husband,  
"GEORGE NEVILLE."

"George Neville!" repeated L. "How very strange;" the blood rushing to my very temples.

"Yes, very strange," reiterated my wife; imagining that my words referred to the purport of the note, and not to the name, which I instantly recognised as that of my old school-fellow.

"One might readily be led to think that the discovery of our name presented the obstacle to which this Mr. Neville alludes," observed Louisa, the mantling blush of wounded pride mounting to her brow.

The remark offended me; and the more so, that I knew it to be founded on truth; and when I caught her eyes fixed on my face, as if waiting for an answer to her supposition, or as if watching the effect it produced on me, I turned away vexed at the scrutiny, and anxious to conceal my emotion. Instead of simply stating the fact that a Mr. Neville, probably this very person, had been a school-fellow of mine, with whom I had been on such cold terms, that a meeting could not be agreeable to either party, I gave no hint whatever of the circumstance. The motive of this disingenuousness originated in a dread of being questioned as to the cause of my coldness with Neville, to relate the particulars of which would not only be painful and humiliating to me, but would probably impair the respect and esteem I was so desirous my wife should entertain for me.

"You don't tell me your opinion, dearest?" said Louisa, gravely.

This pertinacity, so unusual on her part, increased my ill-humor; and there was a sternness in my manner, when, affecting to forget the former remark, I reiterated the words, "My opinion on what?"

"On the passage in Mr. Neville's letter that seemed to me to imply that the discovery of our name was the obstacle to his coming here."

"I had forgotten all about it," replied L. "In truth, such a puerility was not worth remembering. Our name could have nothing to do in the matter; but I suppose, that knowing his wife to be very giddy and unguarded, facts which her mode of making our acquaintance proves, he meant his not coming for her a reproof, and his remark that he had already discovered our name though she was still ignorant of it, as another. You must admit, Louisa, that although a very charming, fascinating person, Mrs. Neville is very giddy and unguarded. She knew nothing whatever of us, yet forced, yes, absolutely forced her acquaintance on us. We might be the very reverse of respectable, for aught she knew to the contrary; she took not

even the trouble to inquire our name, yet with an impetuosity to be found only in novels where the heroines rush into each other's arms at first sight, and vow eternal friendship, she made your acquaintance without introduction, came to our house and established herself here with all the ease and confidence of an old friend. Is it not natural that her husband should disapprove and resent such unthinking conduct, such a perfect solecism in etiquette and worldly usage; and I shall not be surprised if, as a punishment to her, he should let the acquaintance drop."

I said this, to prepare Louisa for the line I fully expected Neville would adopt, but it by no means answered the desired end, for she observed,—

"I am so ignorant of worldly usages, that I am a bad judge on this subject, but candor obliges me to say, that when I saw a young mother, morning after morning, walking in the same path as myself, and apparently as fondly devoted to her child as I am to mine, I observed her with pleasure. Her beauty and looks of kindness attracted, her notice of my child gratified me, and when she addressed me, I was quite as willing to make her acquaintance as she was to make mine. I could have certified that she was good, gentle, and pure-minded, and she, it appears, once judged as favorably of me. You men know not, cannot know, the free-masonry that exists between young mothers. A glance, a smile makes them acquainted. There was the blue sky above our heads, the calm sea beneath us, the umbrageous trees, the green fields, the flowery hedge-rows; the carol of birds, and the breaking of the waves on the shore, were the only sounds that broke on our ears; and with two persons so ignorant of the ceremonious etiquette of society, it is not to be wondered at that we forgot the propriety, if not the necessity, of a formal introduction. I say this," continued Louisa, with much more animation than I had ever seen her previously evince, "to prove that Mrs. Neville was no more culpable of giddiness or unguardedness than myself. Had I met her advances with coldness, which it never could enter my head to do, she certainly would not have come here."

"Then let this serve as a lesson," said I gravely, "not to break from the established usages of Society, for be assured certain codes of etiquette were not formed until the necessity of such were felt;" and I left the room to prevent the continuance of a discussion, in which I felt I should have the worst of the argument, so disposed was my wife to think well of her new friend, and so desirous to exculpate her from the charge of giddiness. Hitherto, Louisa had never offered any opposition to my opinions. If she adopted them not, she at least allowed them to pass unquestioned. Her warmth on this occasion, although it surprised and annoyed me, bore evidence not only to the generosity of her character, but also that she could think for herself—and this displeased me.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE next day I noticed that Louisa appeared anxious and unsettled. She frequently walked to the window, looked out, then sat down again, took up her work, or a book, and, in short, exhibited indubitable evidence of what, in vulgar parlance, is termed fidgetiness,—a disease, if it may be so considered, of which I had never before seen the slightest symptoms in her. Well did I divine the cause. She expected an early visit from her friend, and the indulgence of this expectation displeased me, knowing as I did that it would not be gratified.

As the day wore away without the anticipated visit, or an explanatory note why it was so long deferred, her restlessness increased, and with it my dissatisfaction. Why should she attach so much importance to seeing a person of whose existence ten days before she was ignorant? Why not be satisfied with my society alone, as I was with hers? Such reflections increased my moodiness. I took up a book, with which I pretended to be occupied, but my eye was more particularly directed to my wife's face, than to the pages.

I proposed a walk to her, but she declined, on the plea that she should be sorry to miss seeing her friend, and Mr. Neville.

"I am sure he must be a most amiable and excellent person," said Louisa, "for his wife has told me so much of his high principles, generosity, goodness of heart, and equanimity of temper, that I have formed a high notion of him, notwithstanding the mysterious passage in his letter, which I confess has excited my curiosity."

These commendations annoyed me; and the more so, as I fancied that Louisa laid a particular emphasis on the words equanimity of temper. This was a qualification which conscience whispered me I was far from possessing, for the trials I had endured had soured and irritated a temper not naturally bad; and, though well aware that I was but a cheerless companion to my gentle wife, I could not bear that she should be made more sensible of this painful fact, by the striking contrast presented by the husband of her friend, as related by his wife.

"You must not place implicit faith in the praises bestowed by Mrs. Neville on her lord and master," observed I, after one of those long pauses which so continually occurred on my part in our tête-à-têtes.

"Have you then ever met him, or heard aught to his disadvantage?" inquired Louisa anxiously.

I hesitated at uttering the positive falsehood of denying that I had met him, and knew the nobleness of his character, so I avoided the question by saying, "I did not precisely refer to Mr. Neville, when I said the praises of husbands by their wives must not be too much depended upon. I dare say that you, dearest, boasted as much of my merits, or rather supposed merits, to your friend, as she did of her husband's?"

"No, not quite," replied Louisa, ingenuously, her cheek coloring as she spoke. "First, because she is so animated, and so much more *loquacious* than I am, that she gave me little

opportunity to talk; and secondly, praising one's husband seems to me very like commending oneself."

The truthfulness and simplicity of this answer did not satisfy me. I took it into my head that there was a mental reservation in it; in fact, that not liking to reveal my gloominess of temper, my habitual silence, she had avoided any mention of me.

"Yes," resumed I, "your friend is indeed very loquacious. Heaven be praised, that in this instance you do not resemble her. Such a companion would drive me mad."

"Yet you appeared amused and interested by our conversation. I never saw you smile so often before, and marking how much her gaiety restored your cheerfulness, I wished that I possessed a portion of it in order sometimes to enliven you. I, too, felt its cheering influence. It reminded me of my girlish days," and she sighed deeply, "when my liveliness used to draw smiles from——"

Her voice faltered, tears started to her eyes, and she walked to the window to conceal them.

At that moment a servant brought a note for her, which she hurriedly opened, and she blushed deeply, as her eyes ran over the lines.

"Whom have you heard from?" asked I, well knowing that she had no acquaintance at Torquay, except Mrs. Neville, and consequently that the letter must be from her. She handed it to me, and then again turned to the window.

"You will be surprised, and I flatter myself as sorry as I am, when I tell you that when you receive this, I shall be some miles away on my journey to London. I had formed such pleasant projects for the next few weeks to be passed in your society, dear Mrs. Herbert, and now my husband hurries me off to town, where business claims his presence. It is the first time I have had reluctance or regret in obeying his wishes. I should so have liked to see you again, for you have made yourself a place in my affection that absence will not destroy. Heaven bless you! Kiss your darling's lips for me, and give my compliments to Mr. Herbert. The carriage is at the door, and I have only time to add that though we may meet no more, I shall always remember you dearly.

"MARY NEVILLE."

"How very strange this sudden departure seems," observed Louisa. "Coupled with Mr. Neville's note of last night, it really appears as if he did not wish her to cultivate a friendship with us, and hurried her away to avoid it."

I felt she rightly divined; yet, to avoid explanation, I was forced to deny it.

"Why," I demanded, "should Mr. Neville have any objection to his wife's friendship for you? There can be no reason that we should think so meanly of ourselves as to admit the possibility of aught so humiliating. The most fastidious can discover nothing in us to furnish a reason for avoidance, so do not, my dear Louisa, allow yourself to attach any importance to what, after all, may have proceeded from the simplest cause. Men have business connected

with their properties, with which they do not always intrust their wives. They may be often called away on the shortest notice; and your acquaintance has been so brief with Mrs. Neville, that her husband would hardly have thought that any more ceremony than a farewell note could be necessary towards us."

And now we relapsed into our former dull and cheerless *tête-à-têtes*. A new prohibited subject was added to the previous ones; for Louisa, in compliance with my implied desire, never mentioned the Nevilles; although, on several occasions, the subject arose to her lips, as I could perceive by her sudden pauses in the midst of a sentence that was evidently leading to it. They often, too, recurred to my mind. Their sudden departure was a new proof of his generosity, and I understood it. He wished to avoid renewing acquaintance with me; yet how avoid it, with the intimacy that had sprung up between our wives, without betraying his disapprobation of me, and so inflicting pain on mine? To prevent this, he had at once removed from Torquay; and I felt grateful for his tact and delicacy.

There was a gravity in the air and manner of my wife ever since the abrupt departure of the Nevilles that greatly vexed me. Could it be possible that she had divined that its cause originated in some motive for avoiding any intercourse with me? Had I simply and frankly owned that we had been school-fellows, and imbibed a mutual dislike, the abrupt departure would have been at once accounted for; but no—with the unhappy desire for concealment which marked my character, I had left her to dwell on a circumstance which my own reason was compelled to admit was, to say the least of it, mysterious. Why had I not told her the truth? Conscience answered the question. The high opinion she had formed of Neville, from all that his wife had told her of him, would, I conceived, induce her to think that our mutual dislike must have proceeded from some fault on my side rather than his. I should be judged the culpable person, because, unhappily, I had allowed my moodiness to throw a dark shade over any good qualities which I might possess; and contrasting the equanimity, the gay and open nature of Neville, with my gloom and reserve, even the partiality of a wife could not prevent mine from adjudging the superiority over me to him.

I had no relations, and my marriage brought me none. Two isolated beings, Louisa and I stood alone in the world, with no relatives or connexions to introduce us into society, or to occasionally break the monotony of our solitude. I sighed when I remembered how gratified my wife had been by the society of Mrs. Neville. How rapidly her presence and innocent gaiety had made the hours fly the few evenings she had passed with us; and I caught myself wishing that my sweet, gentle, sensitive Louisa possessed her gaiety of heart and animation, forgetful that it was my gloom and moodiness that had clouded her natural cheerfulness, and imposed a constraint which I never had encouraged her to shake off.

How did the playful gaiety of manner of Mrs.

Neville draw her out, as sun-beams do the closed flower, until it expands before its genial influence, putting forth its beauty and sweetness; while I was as the cold bleak wind before which the mind of this gentle being closed itself, seldom allowing the treasure it contained to be revealed. Why could I not place her in a chosen circle, where she could soon form friends, and in which my moodiness might, if only for a few hours of every day, be dissipated, as it was in the society of Mrs. Neville?

While thus longing for an interruption to the monotony of our seclusion, I felt vexed and offended when the sadness or abstraction of my wife betrayed that she, too, though perhaps unconsciously, desired society. Sometimes I would make a desperate effort to shake off my gloom, and become companionable. I would read aloud to her while she worked, or try to keep up a conversation. But the attempt was seldom crowned with success, because the effort was too painful to be long sustained, and I soon relapsed into silence and abstraction again.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

RESTLESS and unquiet, like all in my unhappy state of mind, I fancied that I should be less miserable elsewhere than in my present abode. I proposed to Louisa to change it, and she assented with a readiness which proved that she was no less desirous than I to leave Torquay. Indeed, ever since the departure of Mrs. Neville, she had ceased to take pleasure in the place, and I foolishly imagined, that in quitting it, and seeking a new scene, she would leave behind her the remembrance of that regretted object of her regard, of which every walk reminded her.

"Whither shall we direct our course, dear est?" asked I, willing to be guided by her wishes.

"Where you will," was the reply, uttered in a tone of such utter despondence, as gave evidence that hope was paralysed in her breast.

"But have you no preference?" demanded I, almost angrily, piqued by the hopelessness of her manner.

"All places are the same to me," answered she, "so I prefer leaving the selection to you."

"Let us try Sidmouth; that, I have heard, is a healthful and quiet place, though a much less picturesque and beautiful spot than this."

"As you like," responded my wife; and it was settled, that at the end of the week we should proceed to Sidmouth.

Unfortunately, two days preceding the one named for our departure, our little girl was taken ill. The best physician in the town was called in; and after some anxious days, during which our darling was in imminent danger, by his skill and attention she was saved, and shortly after pronounced convalescent.

Fondly as I loved our child, it was not until I saw her in a state that threatened every moment to deprive her of life, that I became aware how dear she was to my heart, and what agony



her loss would occasion me. Parents who mix much in the world and partake its amusements, can form little notion of the intensity of affection entertained by those who live in seclusion, and are in the habit of seeing their offspring many times in the day. My child was the sole sun-beam that shed a ray on my gloomy existence, and I felt, when I beheld her laid pale, emaciated, and almost senseless on her little couch, that if she were snatched from me I could no longer bear up against the weight of misery that was pressing on my heart.

The daily visits of the worthy physician, Doctor Western, had led to an intimacy with us which, heightened by gratitude for his having, under heaven, saved the life of our child, ripened into friendship. He had brought his wife and daughter, amiable and well-educated women, to visit my wife, who, finding them intelligent and agreeable, derived so much pleasure from their society, that she encouraged their attention; and one or other of them looked in most days, and often passed the evening with us.

My child's health being perfectly re-established, and my wife's much improved, we saw no reason to decline a pressing invitation from Dr. and Mrs. Western to drink tea with them, to meet a few friends. Accordingly, having seen our darling asleep, and left her nursemaid employed with her needle in the room, we proceeded to the Doctor's abode. Some fourteen or fifteen persons formed the circle assembled there, and in two of the number I recognised, with no pleasurable feelings, my old fellow-collegian, Mordaunt, with whom I had fought a duel, and in his wife, the *ci-devant* Miss Melville. Doctor Western, according to the old fashion peculiar to provincial towns, introduced his guests to each other, and as my name was pronounced I noticed Mordaunt and his wife exchange glances, in which surprise was much more visible than satisfaction. They bowed coldly when the introduction to us took place. The husband looked embarrassed, and the wife—who, from a pretty, shy, and timid girl, was grown into a flaunting, *over-dressed*, coquettish-looking woman—bridled, tossed her head, affected to cast down her eyes when she met mine, and, in short, behaved as absurdly as a weak and silly country boarding-school girl could possibly do. It happened, by chance, that Louisa was seated between the mistress of the house and Mrs. Mordaunt, who stared at her, if not rudely, at least with a degree of curiosity that seemed greatly to surprise the object of it. After gazing at Louisa intently, she often turned her glance to a large mirror on the opposite side of the room, as if to compare her own face and form with those of my wife, and then she would bridle, simper, and toss her head again. As I looked on her, I felt ashamed that I ever could have admired, or fancied that I loved such a being, for the contrast with Louisa was so much to her disadvantage, as to draw attention still more to her showy, and, I may add, vulgar style of beauty, and ill-chosen finery. Never had my wife appeared to greater advantage than contrasted as she now was by Mrs. Mordaunt. Her calm and beautiful face, her distinguished air, the classic shape of her small and finely turned head, with its luxuriant raven

tresses bound round it, and the simple elegance of her dress, combined to render her one of the most charming creatures ever beheld.

"Have you been long at Torquay?" inquired Mrs. Mordaunt.

The question being answered, after a short pause Mrs. Mordaunt observed, "How very ill Mr. Herbert is looking. I hardly recognised him, he is so very much changed. I knew him when he was at Oxford," continued the lady; and she simpered and cast her eyes down. "I dare say you have often heard him speak of me?"

"Not that I remember," replied Louisa coldly.

"Perhaps not as Mrs. Mordaunt," resumed the lady, "but as Miss Melville, I'm sure he has spoken of me."

"No, I never heard him speak of any one of that name."

"Then I am sure it was because he was afraid of making you jealous, that he did not tell you how desperately in love he was with me; how he wanted to marry me, how he fought a duel about me with Mr. Mordaunt, and how I preferred the latter."

Not a single syllable of this speech escaped my ear; and as I listened to it, I felt that I could, with pleasure, see her who uttered it consigned to the darkest cell of the county jail, as a punishment for her vulgar lequacity on the present occasion.

Louisa looked at her with undissembled astonishment, and there was a degree of natural *humeur* in the stateliness of her air, as she replied,

"I confess, madam, that my husband has never confided to me his boyish attachments."

"How very odd!" said the incorrigible Mrs. Mordaunt. "Now, my husband has told me of every flame he ever had; and very jealous he makes me sometimes, when he talks of them, and praises them up to the skies. I was quite a simpleton when I married him, and but lately come from school, where Mrs. Dobson, the mistress, had taught us that we must seldom speak, and then hardly above our breath; and cast down our eyes whenever any gentleman looked at, or spoke to us. I came to Oxford to live with my aunt, Mrs. Scuddamore; and Mr. Herbert, your husband, was the first young man I knew. He thought when he saw me casting down my eyes every time they met his, just as Mrs. Dobson had taught her young ladies, that I was in love with him, and so perhaps I might have been, if I had not just then seen Mr. Mordaunt, who was so free and easy in his manner, and so flashy in his dress, that he took my fancy at once, and I thought no more of Herbert, who was so shy and melancholy. Quite sentimental, as one might say. Well, I married Mr. Mordaunt, and ever since we have led such gay lives, going about from one watering-place to another, and leaving each the moment the novelty is worn off."

My wife faintly smiled, and introduced some other subject. We waited, by Louisa's desire, until the party had broken up, and she exerted herself so successfully to appear as usual, that no one save me could have discovered that while thus calm and unconcerned, nay even cheerful,

in appearance, her heart was a prey to anxiety and chagrin.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

Mr wife and I called two days after the party at Dr. Western's, to take leave of the family, we having decided on quitting Torquay. The doctor was from home, but we found Mrs. and Miss Western in the drawing-room, into which we were ushered. I detected a look of surprise and displeasure in the countenance of Mrs. Western, as the servant announced us, which indicated that our presence was neither expected nor desired. Coldness and constraint had taken the place of the former cordial greeting we had been accustomed to receive, and the change in the manner of our hostess and her daughter was so visible that we abridged our visit and took leave, heartily regretting that we had paid it.

When we left the house of Dr. Western an observation on the marked coldness of our reception arose to my lips, and I was on the point of giving it utterance, when the reflection that it must have originated in some communication to my disadvantage, made by Mr. or Mrs. Mordaunt, occurred to me, and checked my comment. I could not bring myself to touch on a subject that must inevitably lead to the disclosures made to my wife by Mrs. Mordaunt, although conscious that she could not help feeling that the treatment we had just experienced must be attributed to the cause I had rightly divined. Louisa was silent and thoughtful during our walk: but as I glanced at her face I noticed that a deep blush was spread over it, even to her very temples, and I groaned in spirit, that I who would have laid down my life to have saved her from one pang of regret, should be the means of drawing on her a coldness and contumely, when she merited only esteem and respect. But was I to submit to such treatment like a coward, conscious of having forfeited all claim to consideration? No, it was not to be borne! I would at once write to Dr. Western, and demand an explanation of the change in the manner of his wife and daughter when we visited them that day. I wrote a letter, and waited with no little impatience for an answer.

The doctor came, instead of writing, and I, seeing him from my window, went out to meet him, in order that Louisa should not know of our having an interview in my house, at which she was not to be present. He was considerably agitated when we met, and I scarcely less so; but more versed in concealing my emotion, I appeared calm, and, to avoid interruption, proposed our walking towards the country.

"I am much pained, I assure you, Mr. Herbert," said he, "that Mrs. Herbert, for whom I entertain so high a respect, should have experienced any annoyance from any one under my roof. My wife and daughter are so little skilled in the usages of society, that they have been, I fear, less urbane than could be wished, and——"

"Pray, Doctor," interrupted I, "say no more

on this point, but simply inform me of the cause of the change in their manner. I surely have a right to demand this."

"I really am most pained. I hardly know what to do or say," said the doctor, and the embarrassment and agitation of his countenance and manner fully proved the truth of his assertion. "But I acknowledge, sir, that you have a right to question me, and therefore I waive my own feelings in consideration for yours. The truth is, Mr. Herbert, Mrs. Mordaunt, whose garrulous propensities know no bounds, paid my wife an early visit, when I was absent from home, and related a whole pack of nonsense, probably wholly unfounded, but certainly to your disadvantage. Had I been present, I should decidedly have informed her that I never listened to ill-natured gossip; and if I could not succeed in checking her, would at least have prevented my wife and daughter from being influenced by her statements; but unfortunately——"

"Excuse me, doctor; but pray inform me of the substance of her communications; for little importance as I attach to the opinion of such a silly and absurd person, it becomes necessary for me to know what statements she could have made that produced such an effect on your family."

"Why the only point in a confused mass of gossip that I could make any sense of was—pray excuse me for repeating anything disagreeable,—that at college you were disliked; nay more, avoided by your fellow-collegians, who held no intercourse with you; and that when you challenged Mr. Mordaunt to fight a duel, you could not find any gentleman who would go out with you as a friend, until her aunt, Mrs. Scuddamore, prevailed on an old officer, a friend of hers, to accompany you. The lady added, that a Mr. Neville, whose wife had been staying here lately, and who intended prolonging her sojourn had, when her husband arrived, been hurried away the following morning, to prevent her associating with Mrs. Herbert and you. This statement, which I dare say is by no means correct, conveyed an impression to my wife and daughter, that there must exist some very strong grounds for this avoidance of you and Mrs. Herbert; and, unfortunately, before I could have removed this impression, you arrived a short time after Mrs. Mordaunt had left my house."

I thanked the doctor for his frankness, accepted with a cold stateliness his apologies and regret for the annoyance inflicted by his wife and daughter, but declined receiving a visit from them, which he pressed on me, and we parted.

Traces of tears were discernible in the eyes of Louisa when I returned home, but she, nevertheless, assumed a faint smile when I entered, and commenced talking of indifferent subjects, as if to turn my thoughts from painful ones. This tact and delicacy of conduct on her part, which ought to have produced only gratitude and tenderness on mine, led to irritating suspicions that wounded me. Why did she so carefully avoid recurring to the communication made to her by Mrs. Mordaunt, or to the marked change in the manner of Mrs. Western and her daughter? What could be more natural than

that she should remark on it to me? Yet not a single word on the subject passed her lips; though, from the increased pensiveness of her countenance, and the traces of tears in her eyes, it was but too evident the subject painfully occupied her thoughts. Could it be that she believed the statements, and dreaded to provoke the fearful infirmity attributed to me? To defeat these terrors, I felt that I must henceforth be ever on my guard; that I must impose an incessant control over my words and actions; and the conviction of this necessity produced such an additional constraint, that my moodiness returned in spite of every effort to banish it.

I walked to the reading-room at Torquay, and from thence wrote a letter to Mordaunt, demanding satisfaction from him for the statement made by his wife to the family of Dr. Western. I added, that I would remain at the library until his answer was sent there, which I requested might be as soon as possible. He did not let me wait long, for before I could have expected to hear from him the following letter reached me:—

"MY DEAR HERBERT—If you will allow me to address you on the terms of good-fellowship peculiar to old college chums, I hope you will not expect me to be answerable for the sayings and doings of my wife, who is the most incorrigible gossip that ever a man was tied to. Ah! Herbert, you had a lucky escape from her. She is everlastingly getting me into scrapes with her tongue, and neither advice nor menaces can check it. As to giving satisfaction—which, I suppose, means nothing more nor less than going out to fight—I must decline it; for, having established my character for courage by our former duel, from the consequences of which my health has never wholly recovered, I have determined on never again fighting. But I am ready to call on Doctor Western, and contradict every word my wife may have said; and also to give from under my hand the most complete denial of the truth of any of her assertions to your disadvantage, as well as the strongest apology I can write for my wife's unfounded gossiping. In fact, I am ready to do anything you wish, except to fight, and am already sufficiently punished by being cursed with a wife who would embroil me with half the world if she could. Little did I think, when I married a girl who was always blushing and casting down her eyes, that she should turn out the greatest hoyden and gossip in the world. I longed to go up and shake hands with you the other night at Dr. Western's, but I did not know how you might take it; but be assured, my dear Herbert, that I am very truly yours, W. MORDAUNT."

Disgusted with the cowardice which dictated the epistle, I blushed for the man who could have written it; and although I longed to show it to Louisa, a sense of shame for the baseness of the writer checked the impulse.

## CHAPTER XXV.

BELIEVING that the Devonshire air did not agree with my wife, I determined to direct our course to London. In that vast metropolis, I hoped that both our minds might be diverted from the *triste* thoughts that had taken possession of them, by the busy crowds that would beset our path, and by the various scenes of amusement it presents. When I consulted Louisa on the subject, she merely answered, "where you will; all places are alike to me." The tone of deep despondence in which this was uttered, pained me deeply, and I endeavored to discover whether she might not prefer some other place. But with her, as she said, 'all places were alike;' an assertion that proves such internal happiness, as to be independent of places; or such misery, that no hope is entertained that any change can bring relief. Alas! the latter was the case, with my poor wife; and I—I who had entailed unhappiness on her, was angry that she should so keenly feel it. Often have I noticed tears fill her eyes, as they bent on our child, whose rosy cheeks offered a sad contrast to the pallid ones of her mother, and whose dimple smiles seemed to mock the sorrowful countenances of the authors of her being.

Arrived in London, we took up our abode at an hotel in Albemarle-street, until I could procure a small ready furnished house.

The noise and bustle of the moving mass in the street, drew the attention of Louisa, and seemed for a short time to divert her from the sadness which was becoming habitual to her: but after some time, a sense of our loneliness in that vast world, where each individual composing the great crowd, hurried on, intent on his own business or pleasure, struck her, and sinking back in the carriage, tired and exhausted, I saw tears drop from her closed eye-lids, while our little girl clapped her dimpled hands, and laughed aloud in delight, at the various novel objects presented to her view in the vast Babylon, now seen for the first time.

The next day I sallied forth alone, in search of a house, Louisa feeling too much fatigued to accompany me. I first proceeded to my old acquaintance, Mr. Vise, with whom I had lately kept up no intercourse, and found that he had been some time absent from England. I was annoyed at this circumstance, for he was the sole acquaintance I possessed in London, and had always evinced a desire to oblige me. After looking at several small houses, none of which pleased me, I at last found one likely to suit in Wilton-street, and the terms being agreed on, I was leaving it when the mistress of it told me she expected a reference, as it was always her custom to demand one: she hoped I would excuse her being so particular, but in London it was absolutely necessary.

The disadvantages of my isolated position never struck me more forcibly, nor more painfully than at this moment. How could I avow to a stranger that I did not know a single person to whom I could refer? After an awkward pause, I took courage to say, that not liking to trouble any of my friends, I would, if equally agreeable

to her, pay a month's rent in advance, and continue to do so while I remained in her house.

"Well, Sir, your appearance is so respectable, that I will, for once, break through my general regulations," replied the landlady; "and I dare say I shall have no reason to regret it."

It was agreed that we should take possession the following day, and I returned to the hotel. On ascending the stairs, I met a lady, who no sooner saw me than she exclaimed—

"Bless me, if it is not Mr. Herbert! I am so glad to see you," and she seized my hand, and shook it cordially. "But you must come into my room, I have a thousand things to say to you," and she still held me by the hand, when, at this moment, Louisa, who was crossing the corridor from her sitting room to her bed-chamber, stood before us. Seeing our recognition, Mrs. Scuddamore, for it was no other than her, immediately said—

"Your wife, I suppose. Pray introduce me. Mr. Herbert and I are old acquaintances, ma'am, and I am very glad to meet him again. Will you walk into my room, or shall I have the pleasure of going to yours? It's quite the same to me. I'm a soldier's widow, almost an old soldier myself, and never stand on ceremony."

Louisa looked at her with surprise and timidity, while I, who would willingly have avoided meeting her, saw no means of getting rid of her proposed visit, and so led the way to our sitting-room.

"Upon my word, Mr. Herbert, I congratulate you on your choice in a wife," said Mrs. Scuddamore. "A very charming young lady, but looking a little delicate, I am sorry to see. You are aware, I suppose, that my poor brother is dead. Yes, poor man, he is no more. He was an excellent person; but as ignorant of the world as a child: knew nothing of life, at least of military life, and never could comprehend its codes and regulations. Poor Captain Brady, I grieve to say, is also dead. His death was a severe blow to me, it broke the last link of my military associations. Ah! Mr. Herbert, it is sad to think how all one's old friends pass away. I was reading an Army List this morning—I always do read the Army List as regularly as when my dear departed Colonel was alive—and I could hardly find an old brother officer still remaining. Poor Captain Brady has left me all he possessed. It was not much, but it proved his attachment to the widow of his commanding officer. You remember how well he behaved when I had him to go out as your second? You have heard, I suppose, that my niece married one of your adversaries? I never approved the match, because I knew Mordaunt to be so deficient in courage, that, had he been in the regiment of my lamented husband, he would have insisted on his leaving it. How my niece, who knew my sense of honor, could have married him, I cannot make out! She is greatly changed, and I cannot say for the better, for she has turned out a hoyden and a gossip; and, had she been the wife of any officer in Colonel Scuddamore's regiment, I would either have conquered her levity and habit of *bavardage*, or have had her sent

to Coventry. Ah! Mr. Herbert, you had a happy escape from marrying her. And pray what was your wife's maiden name?"

"Maitland," was the reply.

"Any relation to Major Maitland, who exchanged from the 62d Foot to the 87th; a brave man and a very good soldier?"

"No relation, ma'am."

"Perhaps she descends from Gen. Maitland, who for a long time commanded the Fusileers, and was remarkable for keeping his regiment in the highest order? A little of a martinet, to be sure."

"No, ma'am, I never heard of any such relations."

The nurse here brought in our child, and Mrs. Scuddamore, having looked at her, said—

"A boy, I hope; if so, I will use my influence at the Horse Guards to procure him a commission when he is old enough."

The sex of the child being explained, an expression of deep disappointment stole over the face of Mrs. Scuddamore.

"I am sorry," said she, "for I think it is a pity there should be so many girls in the world. What can one do with them? whereas boys can always be put into the army or navy, and serve their king and country. Are you going to dine at home, good folk? I will order my rations to be served in your room, and join your mess. It will be more sociable, and I hate dining alone."

What could we do but submit as well as we could to this infliction—and a very great one my wife and I felt it to be? How did we rejoice that we had secured a house, into which we were to move the following day; for to be longer exposed to the free and easy manners of Mrs. Scuddamore, we both felt would be unbearable.

I had hoped that for once Louisa might have been amused by the originality of Mrs. Scuddamore—so unlike anything she could ever have met with before—but I was disappointed. Her coarseness and freedom of manner excited only disgust in the mind of my wife, who shrank from her with instinctive dread. Some allusion having been made to Wales, Mrs. Scuddamore said, *à propos* of Wales,—

"Did you know that beautiful young girl whose sudden disappearance was noticed in the provincial papers, and whose body was found, six months after, in the river? I remember an artist, who is a distant relative of mine, showed me a charming portrait he made of her, but a few weeks before her tragical death."

I felt Louisa's eyes were fixed on me, and I would have given worlds to appear unmoved; but the effort of self-possession was beyond my strength. A cold shudder passed over my frame, I was conscious of being very pale.

"Are you ill, Mr. Herbert?" inquired Mrs. Scuddamore. "Do let me ring for a glass of *liqueur des braves* for you; or, perhaps a little brandy and water would be better. You really look quite livid."

—Before I could frame a reply, if, indeed, I could have found utterance for one, my wife said, with a sorrowful but calm countenance,—

"Alas! madam, the tragical circumstance to

which you referred occurred in our family; the person whose loss we must ever deplore, was my sister."

"And was it never ascertained how she met her death?" resumed our callous tormentor.

"Never," replied my wife. "But, spare us, Madam, the subject is too painful, the wound too recent to be *touched*," and she covered her face with her handkerchief, and wept in silence.

"I am sorry to have grieved you," observed Mrs. Scuddamore, "but to those who, like me, have seen a field of battle with hundreds lying dead and dying, covered with ghastly wounds and gore, the death of one single individual, and by so easy a death as drowning, appears so light and different to what it must to persons like yourselves, who have never witnessed such scenes, that I did not think I should have pained you by recurring to the loss in your family."

Mrs. Scuddamore left us, to our great relief, a short time after, and when the door had closed on her, my wife exclaimed,

"O! never, dearest, let me see that odious and unfeeling woman again; she has made me feel quite ill and nervous."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

WE removed into our new abode in Wilton-street the following day, taking especial care to conceal our address from Mrs. Scuddamore. Louisa was pleased with the house, and the landlady, who was waiting to receive her, took such a fancy to her and our little girl, that she unlocked some of her store of ornaments and comforts, which she never, as she carefully explained to us, had given the use of to any of the tenants of the dwelling, "unless," said she, "as in the present instance, when the lady was more than ordinarily nice."

There are few things more agreeable than accompanying the woman one loves, to the places worthy of attention in a large capital. The originality of Louisa's mind, and the natural good taste she possessed, lent a fresh attraction to whatever we saw; and as I noticed the pleasure she experienced, and felt the advantage I derived in having my attention drawn from my own sad thoughts, I was disposed to regret that I had not sooner brought her to London. Even the isolation in which two persons, without acquaintances, but who love each other, find themselves, draws them more closely together, and in the vast crowd of strange faces, and in the loud hum of unknown voices, they turn with increased tenderness and dependence to each other. After some weeks passed in sight-seeing, I began to fear that Louisa was over-fatigued by the exertion; for her appetite failed, she grew thin, and pale, and got a slight cough. She made light of all this, and when I wanted to call in a physician, dissuaded me from it, saying, that now she had seen all the London sights, she should have time to recover from *her fatigue*, and get well again. Thinking a

little country air might be of service to her, I took her, and our nurse and child, every fine day on some little excursion in the environs of London, and the beautiful scenery so charmed and delighted her, that the exhilaration of spirits it produced lured me into the hope that she was really deriving benefit from them. But, alas! the relief was only temporary. Fatigue and exhaustion followed every exertion, and, no longer to be blinded by her assertions, that her indisposition was not of a grave character, I called in a physician of the highest repute, to attend her, and awaited his sentence with as much terror as a culprit ever did that of his judge. Yet, though filled with a terror that almost paralysed my mind, I could not bring myself to think that I *could* lose her! How could I bear to live without her who was the very soul of my existence, the strong tie that bound me to life? No, the blow was too terrible to contemplate, and like many a wretch under similar misfortune, the consciousness of my utter inability to support it, led me to believe it impossible.

The physician came, and although his guarded manner might have imposed on any one less deeply interested in ascertaining the truth than I was, it did not deceive me. The questions he put, at once revealed to me that he suspected consumption to be the malady he was called in to minister to, and the answers were, alas! but too well calculated to confirm his worst fears. And she, looking beautiful as ever, her eyes even more lustrous than when in perfect health, and a light pink spot on each cheek, appeared as calm and fearless while replying to his inquiries, as if only the most trivial malady was in question.

I attended the physician to another room with a beating heart, longing, yet trembling to inquire his opinion of his patient. The gravity of his countenance prepared me to expect nothing favorable, yet when he confessed his fears that the case was a pulmonary one, the shock nearly overcame me. He recommended change of climate, said her youth was much in her favor, advised her going to Nice with as little delay as possible, and laid great stress on the necessity of her mind being kept quiet, and her spirits cheerful.

I feared that the huskiness and tremulousness of my voice might betray my emotion, and hesitated for some time before I dared speak.

"I see that the doctor has frightened you, dearest," said she, placing her hand in mine. The hand was burning, and bore fearful evidence of the truth of his opinion.

"No, my love," replied I, "he has not frightened me; but he told me it is absolutely necessary, for the health of us both, that we should go to a milder climate."

I feared she might be averse to going abroad solely on account of her own health, but knew that if she was led to believe it necessary for mine, she would at once consent; so therefore I used this artifice.

"I knew you were not well," said she; "I was quite certain of it for a long, long time, though you would not acknowledge it, and if the doctor thinks going abroad will do you good,

I have not the least objection, though I don't think it at all necessary for me."

I pressed her to my heart, and thanked her for this ready accordance to my wishes, adding that I hoped she would be ready to leave England in two or three days.

The preparations for our journey were soon made, and within four days from the first visit of Doctor Harford, we were *en route* for Nice.

And now a new epoch seemed marked in the page of my troubled life! The one terrible event that had colored it, and which had fixed itself in my memory with a tenacity that defied every effort to weaken its impression, now faded away before the new and all-engrossing feeling of dread, occasioned by the danger of my wife. This dread haunted me by day, and left me not even in my dreams. I would gaze on that beautiful face, instinct with the soul's meaning, and ask myself, could it be possible that death had already marked her for his prey,—that in a few months, it might be hidden in the dark and silent grave! I would listen to the tones of that low, sweet voice, and shudder at the thought that it might soon be hushed for ever, leaving no echo save in my tortured heart, until the menaced calamity seemed too mighty, too overwhelming for possibility, and I have said, "No, no, it would be too, too dreadful; all else but this I could bear."

The belief that I was ill awakened all the tenderness of my adored wife,—a tenderness so soothing, so touching, as to increase mine to torture. No, not even in the intoxication of passion, when, in all her bridal charms, she first blessed my fond arms, did I love her as now—*now*, when I dreaded that every day might bring our separation nearer.

Yet still she declared she felt no worse, though every exertion proved that there was less strength to bear it than before, and the increasing alteration of her form betrayed the ravages of disease. Her cough, too, became more troublesome, her nights more restless; but she bore all without a murmur; and so placid was the state of her mind, so cheerful her manner, that we could have believed her life was in danger.

We only stopped on the road a sufficient time to rest her, and reached Nice by easy journeys, in little more than a fortnight after we left England. But even in that brief time, a fearful change had made itself visible in my wife's state of health. Her features had assumed sharpness, her eyes seemed to have entered more profoundly the large dark orbits in which they were set; her chest, formed so symmetrically round and prominent, appeared flattened and narrowed, and her finely formed throat, as if too weak to support her head, rested languidly on one side, always requiring a pillow to rest on.

And yet she talked of her recovery as if it were a thing to be by no means despaired of; formed plans for the future, that future which my foreboding heart told me was not reserved for her, and chided me when she detected in my countenance or manner, any indication of the alarm which filled my breast. I procured the most comfortable lodging that was disengaged at Nice, but even that was, very inferior to

what she had been accustomed to in England, and greatly did it pain me to see that no effort or expense could secure her the many little articles of luxury, so essential to an invalid, confined wholly to the house.

I went to an English physician established at Nice, the morning after our arrival, and he accompanied me to the hotel, to see Louisa. His first injunction was for her not to leave the house while the *bis*, as he termed it, was set in, as at present, for it was most trying to invalids. It was, therefore, a week or ten days after the lodging procured had been ready for her reception, before she could be removed to it, and when she was, a fresh cold, although every possible means had been adopted to guard against it, had been taken, which produced increased irritation in the chest. Still, not a complaint escaped her lips. It seemed as if increased suffering only called forth more prominently new proofs of that angelic sweetness of temper and patience for which she had ever been remarkable.

Oh! the torture, the agony of beholding a creature dearer, ten thousand times dearer to one than life, supporting the most acute disease, and yielding without a murmur to the decree of the Almighty! At length, the total prostration of her strength gave her, as I believed, the first notice of her real state. She had been every day lifted in my arms from her bed to her sofa, and hitherto had been able to assist herself a little in the operation, and to clasp my neck while I conveyed her. But on this occasion, I found she was utterly helpless from weakness, and her fragile hands dropped listless from my neck, unable to continue their grasp. A passion of tears followed. She wept long, and looked at me through her tears, with a glance full of such unutterable tenderness and regret, that, unable to conceal my emotion, I sobbed aloud.

"I see, I feel, dearest, that I must soon go hence," said she. "It was so sweet to be cared for, to be nursed with such tenderness as I have been by you, that I forgot, in the happiness it afforded me, that danger might lurk in the illness that called forth such precious proofs of love. To leave you now, when I know how dear I am to you, and to leave our child, too,—oh! it is a terrible trial for your poor Louisa;" and she wept afresh, while I pressed her to my heart, and she reclined her head on my shoulder. "And yet, it seems impossible too," resumed she, "with all this hoard of love here," and she pressed her hand to her heart, "with all the bright hopes of a life to be passed with you and our child. Yes, it does seem as if it cannot be true that I am to be torn from you."

"Let us hope, dearest, that you may yet be spared," whispered, I though my heart belied the hope I fain would give.

"No, no, do not cheat me with false hopes, but try to give me courage to support the doom that awaits me. Teach me to bear our coming separation as I ought, as a Christian woman, who trusts in the mercy of her Redeemer, should, and who looks forward to being re-united to those loved on earth, in that better world, where no partings are."

But, although resigned to the will of her Creator, and daily preparing her mind and mine, for

the earthly separation she knew to be inevitable, any amelioration in her state, a better night, a day more free from pain or cough, gave her hope that her life, if not saved, might be prolonged; and it was only by the increased sadness that stole over her, when she found the hope illusive, that I knew it had been indulged.

I could not bear to leave her presence, and she, dear and gentle creature, seemed to forget her pain when I was near her, and never slumbered so calmly as when she knew I was seated by her side.

The *vent de bise*, so often and severely felt at Nice, had disappeared, and the advent of milder weather, and occasional gleams of sunshine, had induced the physician to yield to Louisa's often repeated request, to be taken out for a little air in a wheeled-chair. This indulgence, promised for the first favorable day, had long been looked forward to with pleasure by the dear invalid, and from an early hour in the morning, when she saw the sunshine illumine the windows of her chamber, she had been impatient to go forth. I took her in my arms down stairs, placed her in the chair, supported by pillows, and walking by the side of it, bent down to catch her feeble accents.

We had proceeded a short distance from our lodgings, when we met one of the many groups of valetudinarians so often encountered at Nice. In this case, the invalid was a man, and evidently in the last stage of consumption, and a woman, so wholly occupied by him as not to appear conscious of surrounding objects, walked by the side of his chair. The two chairs met on the pavement; the occupants glanced at each other with that mingled sentiment of pity and interest awakened by the similarity of their fate, peculiar to invalids, and at the same moment I recognised in the poor faded shadow, propped up by pillows in the chair, my old school-fellow Neville. His wife,—for it was Mrs. Neville who walked by his side—turned her head at this moment, and her eyes and those of my dear Louisa met. In a moment Mrs. Neville was by my wife's side, pressing her hand in hers, and speechless with emotion, trying in vain to address her, while poor Neville, reaching forth his hand, exclaimed:—

"My dear Herbert, this is no time for remembering old differences. Let us forgive, as we hope to be forgiven, and forget, if, indeed, we have either of us had any real cause for coolness, which I doubt."

I clasped his offered hand, while his warm-hearted wife said, "This, dearest, is my amiable friend, Mrs. Herbert, of whom I have so often spoken to you." And Louisa smiled, and nodded kindly to him.

"This," said Neville, "is a sad meeting, but I am glad it has taken place. I have often since my illness thought of you, Herbert, and wished that we might meet. My dear wife formed such a regard for yours, that I regretted and reproached myself for having taken her away from Torquay. It was wrong—it was unkind, but you will pardon it, will you not?"

I met Neville's kindness in the self-same spirit that prompted it. My heart had been softened and ameliorated by the state of my adored

Louisa, and when I beheld him, whom I had last seen in the pride of health and manhood, reduced to his present pitiable state, my heart had no place for aught save regret and regard.

My countenance, I suppose, as well as my manner, revealed my feelings, for Neville again took my hand, and while he warmly pressed it, said, "You will come and see me, Herbert, will you not? and my wife will go and see yours."

"And your darling girl, where is she?" inquired Mrs. Neville, of Louisa.

"Here, dearest friend," replied Louisa; "and she is, thank-God, in perfect health. And yours, is she here?"

"No, I left her in England with my mother, that I might devote all my time to him," and she gave a look full of tenderness to her husband.

Both invalids were drawn to the same spot, the most sheltered one in the whole vicinity of Nice, and Mrs. Neville and I walked by the chairs, conversing with their occupants. I learned from Neville that a neglected cold, caught by sleeping in a damp bed, the very time he was coming to join his wife at Torquay, had fallen on his lungs, and defied the treatment of all the physicians he had consulted: that after unavailingly testing their skill, he had been ordered to Nice, "where they have sent me to die," Herbert," dropping his voice, that his wife might not hear him.

"Yes, I feel it is so, but I must submit to the will of God. But I was so happy," and his lip trembled, "that it is hard to die, to leave her on whom my soul dotes. But you also, Herbert, you have your cares. Your poor wife, I fear, is very ill."

I shook my head, and tears rushed into my eyes, for I could not form words to tell him that I had lost all hope of saving my Louisa.

"I am so glad," said my wife, when we returned from her little drive, "that we met the Nevilles, and that you and he are reconciled. I cannot express the pleasure it has given me, dearest, for now you will not be left quite alone when I am taken from you, and our child will have one kind friend."

"Poor Neville will not long be spared to his wife," said I, anxious to turn her thoughts from herself, and unable to bear the frequent recurrence she was in the habit of making to her own death.

"Yes," observed she, "I fear her heavy trial will soon come. He seems as near the last parting on earth as I am. But I think our being brought together seems something like providential to both parties, and this interposition of the Almighty's goodness, if I may be permitted so to consider it, ought to be received with gratitude, and not slighted."

She made me visit Neville that evening, and he insisted on his wife going to sit with mine, while I remained with him. Our lodgings were luckily very near each other, and by this arrangement the invalids were never left without society.

Poor Neville! Never did a kinder, warmer heart beat in a human breast than his! It was no wonder that his wife adored him, for he possessed every quality to conciliate affection and command respect! She was no longer the gay,

sprightly creature I had seen at Torquay. Subdued to pensiveness, her high spirits fled with her husband's health, and pale and careworn, she looked as if fifteen years had been added to her age. Her frequent visits were a great comfort to my Louisa, and in the confidential intercourse established between them, a promise was asked, and given, that through life Mrs. Neville would prove a friend to my daughter, nay more, a protectress, should death deprive her of her father.

When I looked on my wife and on Neville, two beings so rich in every estimable quality, fast sinking into their premature graves, I have thought that if the Almighty would yield a prolongation of life to our prayers, existence would be henceforth to us who loved, who almost idolized them, a boon, a blessing, to command our eternal gratitude. But, alas! this blessing was not for us! The fiat had gone forth, and prayers and tears were unavailing to stay the terrible stroke impending over our heads.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

There is something peculiarly touching in witnessing the triumph of virtue, combined, as great virtue invariably is, with superior intellect, in the last stages of life. The patience, the resignation, the thought for others outliving every selfish feeling.

Thus was it with my beloved wife, and with my dear friend. My soul, long darkened by error, and overshadowed by one memory so harassing as to render life a scene of gloom and trial, instead of a blessing, seemed to be illumined by the glorious light that now broke in on it from those two admirable creatures, who, like setting suns, gave forth the brightest light when about to vanish from our view. How pure, how ennobling, were the thoughts uttered by their lips, lips that were, alas! soon to be sealed by death; and how eagerly, even in the midst of my grief, did my ears drink in the wisdom which emanated from minds already freed from the soil and influence of earthly passions. I seemed, all unworthy as I was, to hold communion with angels, and my grosser nature became purified by the contact with them.

"You must unlearn the worldly wisdom acquired under the tuition of Mr. Trevyllan," would Neville say to me, "before you can be able to make friends, or to appreciate them. Suspicion, though it may sometimes preserve a man from being duped, erects a barrier between him and his fellow men that for ever excludes sympathy and friendship; and far better is it to suffer some inconvenience from misplaced confidence, than to shut up one's heart from the genial influence of good will. Think well of mankind *en masse*, even though *en détail* you may find some unworthy specimens of the genus, for good thoughts beget a healthy mind, whereas evil ones—and suspicion is ever evil—corrodes the mind that once receives it as a guest. A suspicious man is never a truly wise

one, just as a superstitious man is never a truly religious one. To have lived some years with so admirable a woman as your wife, Herbert, ought to have vanquished the error grafted on your character by your unfortunate intimacy with your guardian."

I dared not tell Neville that my suspicions had sometimes lighted on the all-faultless creature with whom he believed a contact would suffice to banish them for ever. No! I restrained my tongue, though Heaven knows how contrite a spirit reigned in my heart, as I remembered the humiliating fact.

And now the attending physician prepared us for the fast approaching death of Neville; and the agony of his poor wife was as intense as if she had not been several months injured to the terrible certainty that she must lose him. She left his side no more; and twice every day did my dear Louisa insist on my going to them. Oh, God of mercy! pardon me, if, when writhing in agony with my own grief, and when I beheld that young pair, also tortured by their coming separation, I dared to question thy goodness, for not vouchsafing to spare *his* life in pity to the poor creature who doted on him, and for not granting me that of my adored Louisa.

"Let my remains be interred in the English cemetery here," said poor Neville to his wife, in my presence, a few hours before he breathed his last.

"My friend Herbert will see the last duties paid, and relieve you, dearest, from the painful details consequent on such situations. Return to England, my beloved, as soon as your presence can no longer be a solace to the wife of my poor friend, and ever continue to be to him as a sister."

Even up to the last hour, his thoughts were turned to the good of others, his noble nature maintaining its influence over a frame reduced to a shadow by pain and disease.

He retained his senses to within a few minutes of his death; pressed my hand and bade me farewell; blessed his absent child; and holding the hand of his wife within his, while he murmured prayers and blessings on her head, resigned his soul to the Almighty, and expired without a groan.

Never did I witness grief like that of the bereaved widow; for now that the restraint which the dread of afflicting him had imposed, was removed, her sorrow mastered her reason for many hours. She could not for some time believe that he was indeed dead, and addressed to the ears, now sealed for ever, the passionate words of endearment that had been wont to fill them with delight. But when she found that all was over, that the husband who had never ceased to be the lover, whose lips had never uttered a harsh word to her, and the tones of whose voice were still ringing in her ear, was gone for ever, her despair was so wild, that I trembled lest she should destroy herself.

I left her to the care of the physician, and with a heart almost broken, returned from the dead—to the dying.

"Your poor friend is released, is he not?" said my wife, as I entered her chamber. "K



saw it by your countenance the instant you came in. Ah! my poor Mary, how my heart bleeds for her? Come near me, dearest. You are ill, worn down. But God will repay you for your kindness to your departed friend."

She pressed her transparent fingers to my brow, and kissed my cheek, but the burning heat of her hands and lips betrayed the fever that was consuming her, and made me tremble.

"I have been thinking, dearest," said she, "that if your poor friend's remains are to be re-signing to earth here, I should like to have mine interred near them. In a strange land it seems less desolate to be buried near some one dear to those most dear to me. Promise me this shall be as I wish."

Her lips quivered, and her voice became tremulous with emotion; and I, losing all self-command, my feelings having been so excited by the death-bed I had left, and the dying one by which I stood, groaned aloud, and fell insensible on her bed. Her silver hand-bell soon brought her maid into the room, but it was not for many minutes that their united efforts could restore suspended animation to my frame.

"Oh, my God! do not forsake him," exclaimed she fervently, "but grant him resignation to bow to thy will, and to live for the child it pleased thee to grant us. Oh! this grief of his disturbs my soul, and draws it back with a mighty effort from the contemplation of that world, where I hoped to be reunited to him, to this vale of tears, where the thought of his sorrow, when I shall have left him, fills me with anguish."

And now that I felt aware that the hours of my adored wife's life were drawing to a close, I could not bear to absent myself even for a moment from her presence. Yet she, ever unselfish, would insist on my going to her bereaved friend, Mrs. Neville, whose sorrow awakened all her sympathy. On me devolved the painful duty of giving instructions for the funeral; but further than sparing her this chagrin, I could be of little use, for she refused to be comforted, and it was only by talking to her of her child, that I could for a moment draw her attention from the dead. There she sat, all day, silent and motionless as a statue, looking at the remains of her husband, until a burst of violent grief would break the stillness of the chamber of death, after which she would again resume her fixed gaze on that pale face, as if she expected to see some change in its marble aspect. By her desire I had a sculptor to take a cast of the face. But even while this operation was performing, she could not be persuaded to leave the room but watched its progress with as much anxiety, as if the dead could suffer pain from it. With her own hands she smoothed the pillow in the coffin, on which his head was to be placed, and when the corpse was laid in its last narrow bed, she left it not for a moment, until it was found absolutely necessary the coffin should be nailed down. The scene was terrible! and the witnessing it shook my nerves so much, that I lost all power of being of use. Happily for her, a deep swoon, the effect of mental and bodily exhaustion, ensued, and for some time she lost in *insensibility* the consciousness of her misery.

I attended the remains of my poor friend to the grave, a solemn and melancholy ceremony which his poor wife could not be dissuaded from being present at, although her trembling limbs were scarcely able to support her languid frame.

When the coffin was lowered into the grave, she would have fallen to the earth, had I not sustained her fainting form. Poor bereaved woman! she felt that she was now alone and desolate; her child, whose presence would have reminded her that she had still a tie on earth, and duties to perform, was far away; so it could not be wondered at, if, stunned and overwhelmed by the blow that had crushed her heart, she prayed for death to reunite her to him she had lost. I had much difficulty in getting her to leave the cemetery, when the last sod of earth was laid on the grave. She clung to the spot with passionate tenderness, for it had now become dear and sacred in her eyes, and she preferred it to all others on earth.

To return to that home where *he* was *not*, but where every object reminded her of him, would, I felt assured, be more than she could bear, and at the suggestion of my dear wife, a vacant apartment in the house in which we lodged had been prepared for the reception of her poor friend. I ordered the carriage to drive towards it, and asked her whether she would not spend an hour with my Louisa. I really felt afraid to leave her alone, and yet I could not remain longer absent from the couch of my dying wife.

"She cannot go to you," said I, "and will be comforted by seeing you."

She hesitated long, but at length consented, and we entered my wife's room. The sight of her poor friend, reduced to the last extremity of weakness, a breathing shadow she might be called, had, as I anticipated it would, a powerful effect on Mrs. Neville. She became more calm, and tears, hitherto almost denied her, flowed in abundance down her pale cheeks; as reclining in a chair by the bed-side, my dear wife holding her hands in hers, she listened to the feeble accents of her friend.

"My stay on earth must now be short," said my adored Louisa, "and it would be most kind in you to remain with me in this house to the last. With my dear friend and my husband by my dying bed, I shall pass away to another world more calmly; do not, therefore refuse this my last request."

"But I shall put you to such inconvenience; I am sure I shall."

"No; all has been arranged in the hope you would not refuse my wishes; a room is ready for you, and your maid is already here."

My wife, with all a woman's tact, made a point of occupying her poor friend continually, so as to leave her as little time as possible to devote to grief. She asked her to read the Bible to her twice a day, to join her in prayer, and to give the anodynes prescribed by the physician. She would place her child in the arms of our friend, and exhort her to remember her own absent one, who would prove a blessing and a comfort to her; and thus, by employing her, interrupted the constant contemplation on her heavy affliction, that would otherwise have

wholly destroyed her health, already greatly impaired by anxiety, confinement, and grief.

"Ah, my beloved friend!" would Mrs. Neville say, when my dear Louisa spoke of her fast approaching end, "how I envy you, who are going to where my adored husband is gone, while I may live for months, aye, years, separated from him."

"You forget that you are a mother; that his child is a sacred legacy bequeathed to you by him," would my Louisa reply; "and that when you are summoned hence, *he* will expect to know how you have fulfilled the task he assigned to you. You must live, if it be the will of the Most High, to perform your duties, and you must not shrink from them."

For me—the scenes I had lately witnessed, and the sight of my adored wife on her death-bed, had taken such an effect on me, that I felt I could not long survive her. Nor did I desire it; for with the selfishness inherent in man and aware that with her would depart my every hope of happiness on earth, I wished for nothing so much as death to unite me to her.

I sometimes betrayed to her this desire, but never without her severely reprehending it.

"What!" would she exclaim, "are mortals, like cowards in the field of battle, to wish to fly from their duty the moment that hope no longer cheers them? Oh, no, my dearest husband! you must not wish to leave your post while a task remains to be fulfilled, nor desire to join me, until the Almighty sees fit to summon you."

Often have I been jealous and offended by her wishing me to live after her. I thought it betokened a want of affection; for I could not, with my selfish nature, judge her high and noble one. I felt that were I on the bed of death, I should rejoice to know she would soon be called to follow me; hence, I could not comprehend the difference of our sentiments on this point. Alas! it was not given to me to know her worth, until I had lost her.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

THREE weeks after I followed my friend to the grave, my beloved wife resigned her gentle spirit into the hands of her Creator. Although long prepared for this heart-rending event, I found myself as unable to support it, when it arrived, as if my foreboding heart and tortured mind had not foreseen that it was inevitable. Her dying farewell to our child, and to me, achieved the measure of my despair; and within an hour after she had breathed her last, I was wildly raving, under the influence of a sudden attack of brain fever, from which, for several weeks, the physicians believed I could never recover. During its violence, I imagined myself dead, and believed that I beheld my lost wife, crowned with more than mortal beauty, in the regions of the blessed, holding out her arms to welcome me. Methought I approached to embrace her, when her dead sister interposed between us, and exclaimed, "Away, sinful man, thou who in life presumed to attach thy evil destiny to her sinless

one; think not that here, where only the good are permitted to join those loved on earth, thou canst be reunited to her."

My senses at length became restored, but such was the extent of my weakness, that I could hardly move. Perhaps it was this total prostration of strength that for the time being vanquished the fever of the brain, and subdued, to a certain degree, the violence of my grief for the loss of my wife; for although I remembered her death,—nay more, every word of that last farewell, which had so agonized me as to bring on the attack that had nearly killed me, I no longer felt the overwhelming grief I had previously experienced. Perhaps a strong frame is required for violent grief. Mine was reduced to such weakness that as well might I have sought to use bodily force as to endure strong mental agony. My dream was vividly remembered, so vividly that I could almost believe that instead of a dream it had been a reality. And then came the recollection of what the man left to take care of me might have thought of my strange ravings, and the great trouble that he believed pressed on my mind. What, if I had uttered all the conversation that my delirium had framed in that terrible dream, and thus had betrayed my dreadful secret to a stranger? There was torture in the thought; and I now found, that although too exhausted for the indulgence of violent grief, I was still accessible to terror. Oh, man! selfish to the last! thou canst outlive grief for those dearer to thee than life; thy feelings, benumbed by bodily weakness, may remain torpid to the appeals of love and memory; but let thy personal safety, or rather, let me think, thy honor and reputation be menaced, and thou canst feel as acutely the danger as if in health.

I had not only a dread, but a secret conviction that in my ravings I had betrayed my secret, and to a stranger, too, who might be disposed to make the worst use of it for his own advantage. Drops of cold perspiration fell from my brow, wrung by terror, as I reflected on all this. What must I do to remove the impression made on this strange man by what I had uttered in my ravings? Here were selfishness and cunning still exerting their combined influence over me, although life scarcely fluttered at my heart, or kept my pulse still beating.

I stole a look at the man through an opening in the curtains, and never did I behold a worse countenance. Large shaggy eyebrows, projecting over small, deep-seated eyes, remarkable for a mingled expression of malignity and cunning; a low and narrow forehead, retreating towards the roots of the hair; a large and ill-shaped nose; a wide and very coarse mouth, and a peculiarly short chin. He was a tall man, of a powerful and muscular form, with herculean limbs, and a very short neck, and his ears were the largest and flattest I had ever seen. No peculiarity in his appearance escaped my attention. I felt instinctively that this man, so unfavored by Nature, might henceforth have a baleful influence over my destiny. I mentally measured his powerful frame with my own now weakened one, and acknowledged that, even in my days of health, I could not struggle with him without the certainty of defeat.

There is always a disagreeable sensation experienced in the consciousness of inferiority in physical force to other men, but when this consciousness of inferiority is felt towards one whom we may have cause to dread, in whose keeping a secret of vital importance to us may be, how much more annoying does it become! The man, while I was examining him, seemed wrapt in deep reflection. His brows were curved, his coarse lips strongly compressed, and from time to time he darted furtive glances towards my bed.

After a pause, he shook his head, and muttered, "Yes, yes, something profitable may be made of this. I'll bet anything that, light-headed as he may be, there's some crime or another at bottom, in which he has been concerned, and that he lets out in his sleep, mixed up with his insane ravings. Why, he has not passed a single night since I have been called in without talking of having destroyed some woman, and of having hidden her body in a cavern. All this can't be the pure raving madness of a brain fever. No, no, there's something in it, I'm sure; and as he can afford to pay for my keeping his secrets, why, I'll be hanged if I don't make him come down handsomely, that's all."

Though this soliloquy was uttered almost in a whisper, not a syllable of it escaped my ear; and terror took such possession of me, that it required a strong effort of my volition to prevent the violent trembling with which I was seized from becoming visible by the movement of the bed.

A thought occurred to me, to try if I could not impose on him by affecting to talk in my sleep. I breathed hard, uttered a few words, and he instantly stole to my bed-side, and bent down to listen.

"Will no one come to release me?" demanded I, keeping my eyes closely shut, and breathing hard, as if I slept. "They hurled me over a steep rock, and when I fell mortally wounded, they dug a hole and threw my body into it; and no one will release it, though I call night and day for deliverance."

"That's a new go, however," murmured the man; "I never heard him talk of being killed himself before. It has always been some woman who fell over the rock, and whom he buried in a cavern. I hope he hasn't been talking nonsense after all, and that there's something of truth at the bottom of all his raving."

"If they would take my body out of the pit," resumed I, "I should then be taken directly to heaven."

"The devil you would," said he; "I am not quite so sure of that, though. I must find out all I can concerning him," continued he. "The nurse knows more about him than the rest,—I'll pump her, and discover where he comes from."

filled me with alarm. Yet how could I counteract his schemes; how prevent the nurse from answering his questions? To put her on her guard would excite suspicion in her mind that there existed some cause for concealment, and this would be dangerous.

Oh! the torture of feeling my bodily weakness to be such, that I could not turn in my bed without assistance, and to know that a villain was bent on discovering a clue to a secret, partly revealed in my ravings, but which I could die rather than have exposed. There were moments, to such fearful crimes may terror of the discovery of guilt lead one, heaven pardon me for the sinful thought! when, had I but the strength to carry my desire into execution, I could have strangled this wretch, while he dozed, as he sometimes did, in a chair by my bed-side, and so have secured his silence, and prevented his further researches into my past history. I thought not of the consequences that must inevitably ensue from his being found dead in my room—so wholly does the mind become blinded to the sense of one danger, in the burning, the mad desire to escape from another—or, if I did, I fancied it would be easy to account for it, by saying he had been seized by apoplexy.

"Yes! Yes!" thought I, and I clenched my teeth, and the spirit of a fiend seemed for a few minutes to have entered my heart, urging murder. "Had I but the strength, he should soon be silenced for ever."

I had conceived a hatred the most intense against this man, who, without any provocation on my part, had turned eaves-dropper; noting down the ragings of delirium of a fellow-creature, worn down by grief, and reduced to death's door by fever, in order to discover some secret, for the keeping of which he could enforce payment. That night's experience taught me how fortunate it sometimes is, that man has not the power to work the evil he wills; for, alas! there are those so weak in principle, and so prone to act on the impulse of the moment, that crime is often only escaped, by the want of power to perpetrate it.

I was surprised to find how much the sense of my grief was dulled. I felt like one who had received some severe bodily injury, to lull the pain of which some strong anodyne had been administered; and who was fearful of even thinking of the wound, lest he should awaken the dormant agony. It is asserted by physicians, that two maladies cannot act on the human frame at the same time; and I believe a similar rule holds good with regard to the mind; for, judging by my own experience, I should say, that two strong passions cannot sway a man at once.

The terror excited in my mind by the wretch in my room had so filled and engrossed it, as to deaden, if not banish, for the time being, my sorrow for the death of my beloved wife; and yet, when my alarmed imagination pictured the danger that might result to me from the villain so bent on discovering my secret, I blest God that his peace could not be disturbed by the success of the utmost extent of his malice. No, she, heaven be praised, was safe. The discovery of my guilt could bring no blush to her cheek, no pang to her heart, and gentler tears than any

### CHAPTER XXX.

To listen to this designing ruffian, arranging his plan for discovering my home and past life,

I had lately shed filled my eyes, as I thought of her in her peaceful grave, where I longed to repose beside her. Then came the thought of my motherless child, and my tears flowed faster. Poor innocent! my heart yearned to embrace her; but yet I must not ask to have her brought to me; I must still for a few days assume the mask of delirium, in order to deceive the spy who was watching me, and cheat him into a belief that the words uttered by me when I slept were but the ravings of insanity. I lay tranquil and overpowered by lassitude and exhaustion, during the long and tedious days that followed my return to consciousness. My own servant generally remained in the room, but I affected not to recognise him, and pretended to doze when he looked at me.

At night the strange man took his place, and then my terror commenced, lest I should sleep, and in my slumber betray my secret. Often was I obliged to pinch my limbs, and pull my hair, to keep myself awake, while pretending to sleep, and in my simulated slumbers, uttering incoherent words to deceive the designing wretch who was carefully noticing every syllable that escaped my lips.

In proportion to my desire *not* to sleep was the drowsiness that stole over me every night, filling me with terror for its possible consequences, while during the day, when the man I feared was absent, I had little inclination to sleep.

One night, while I pretended to slumber, I saw this man take the candle in his hand, approach it close to my eyes to ascertain if I indeed slept, and then, having repeatedly passed the light before my closed lids, he searched in the drawers of the looking-glass and commode for something, leaving not a single one unopened. At length he found a bunch of keys; I heard them jingle in his hand, and with them he tried to open my writing-box. The patent lock foiled his attempts, and then, with a half-suppressed oath, he searched the drawer of the dressing-box, in which he found my watch, to the chain of which the key he sought was attached. He seized it, opened the writing-box, and began examining its contents; but, finding nothing to gratify his curiosity, or to confirm his suspicions, he muttered curses, and taking up the portrait of my beloved wife, opened and examined it. I could have killed him for the profanation. That picture I had induced her to sit for in London, when I first began to be alarmed about her health. It was an admirable resemblance, and I would not, so highly did I value it, have confided it to the hands of any creature on earth, save to those of her friend Mrs. Neville, or her old nurse at home.

"Ho! ho!" muttered the wretch, "this, I suppose, was his wife, and a devilish pretty creature she must have been, if she had not such a sickly look. I don't like your whey-faced women, not I, give me a buxom wench, with roguish eyes and rosy cheeks, that's the girl for my money."

I cannot describe the mingled feelings of anger and disgust which I experienced, as I listened to this ruffian commenting on the portrait, and comparing it with the object of his own vulgar taste. There are some persons who inspire us with

such repugnance, that we would not, could we avoid it, permit their glances to fall on any woman dear to us—but when the beloved object is no more, her memory becomes so sacred in our hearts, that we shrink from the notion of her portrait being profaned by the gaze of vulgar eyes. And there I lay inert, and powerless to avenge the insult, though almost suffocated with rage against the offender.

The wretch still held the portrait, and looked at it. "Yes," resumed he, "she must have been a pretty creature before she grew sickly. I dare say 'twas his sulky temper that spoilt her health. The nurse-maid confessed to me, when I questioned her, that although he was an affectionate husband, he never was a cheerful companion to her poor mistress; but, from the beginning, was a gloomy, melancholy man. That's what convinces me he must have committed some crime or other, that he's always afraid will be found out. What else would make him so gloomy and unlike other men?" And now he laid down the portrait, and renewed his search in the writing-box. He found a purse with some eight or ten guineas, counted them over, and then paused, as if hesitating whether or not he should appropriate them. Some slight noise disturbed him; he let fall the purse into the writing-box, hastily closed the lid, and approaching my bed, he stealthily examined me; but I kept my eyes closed, murmured a few words as if in sleep, and so deceived him.

"I really was startled," muttered he; "to be caught with his purse in my hand, and his writing-box open, would be an awkward job. By Jove, it was lucky for him that he did not awake and see what I was about, for if he had, there was nothing left for me to do but to place the pillow on his face with one hand, while I clutched his throat with 't'other, and so made an end of him; and, when all was over, I'd have called up the house, and sworn that he had been seized with a fit."

My blood seemed to congeal in my veins as I listened to these words, which, though pronounced in a whisper, I heard distinctly, owing to the silence that reigned in the room, and my sense of hearing, always acute, having now become more so from the abstemious regimen I had lately undergone. I shuddered at the thought of being in the power of a ruffian who, I felt convinced, would not hesitate to commit murder, if he deemed it necessary for his own ends.

"I've half a mind to take these ten shiners for my own use," muttered he. "The chances are, the owner will never recover to claim them; and, if he should, he will forget all about 'em, so much has he suffered since he put 'em here, and so crazy has he been. But no, let's have a care. Suspicion would fall on me; and it's likely enough that chap, his servant, has looked into this here writing-box as well as I have; he knows the money was here, and would soon guess who took it. No, I'll not take a guinea of it; I'll resist temptation for once, and try to make my money by getting that there fellow who is sleeping so soundly into my power, instead of putting myself into his, for the sake of a few paltry guineas."

So saying, he replaced the purse and its con-

tents in the writing-box, arranged the papers in the state in which he had found them, locked the box, put back the watch in the drawer, and, having again examined to see that I slept, resumed his place by my bedside, and I, breathing loudly, muttered incoherent ravings now and then, to which he listened attentively, occasionally exclaiming—

"Psha! stuff! he doesn't let out anything worth hearing of late, but talks a pack of sense."

I could no longer sustain my present painful position, so wholly worn out was I in body and mind by sleepless nights and feverish anxiety; so, the following day, after the surreptitious opening of my writing-box, I affected to awake as if from a troubled dream, and demanded to see the physician. My servant was rejoiced to find that my reason was restored; and, when the doctor came, I inquired for my child and Mrs. Neville so collectedly, as to convince him that the fever had wholly subsided, and that nothing remained to be done, but to endeavor to restore my strength by a more nutritious regimen. He promised, that when I was a little stronger, I should see my child, of whose health he gave me a most satisfactory account.

"I should be glad," said I, "to have no one to sit up at night in my room, it disturbs and prevents me from sleeping."

"You are still too weak, my dear Sir, to be left alone at night," replied the physician.

"But could not a bed be arranged for my own servant on the sofa?" demanded I.

"Certainly, if you prefer it, and I will immediately give instructions that your wish shall be carried into effect."

What a weight seemed to be removed from my mind by this arrangement! Yet, fearful that the wretch I so dreaded might again enter my chamber, I said, that I wished the man who had sat up with me might be sent away, and remunerated for his trouble.

"Has he not satisfied you by his attention?" inquired the doctor.

"He has, I believe, behaved well enough," replied I; "but invalids are, I suppose, prone to be fanciful; and I confess I should be glad to have him sent away."

"Then he shall be dismissed at once," observed the doctor, good-naturedly; "I will give him his *congé*."

A great weight was removed from my mind in the certainty that I should see this man no more; yet my conscience reproached me for not informing the doctor, who had recommended him, of his having opened my writing-box and examined its contents. A secret dread of exciting his vengeance deterred me from taking this step; and as he had actually not robbed me, however well disposed to do so, I excused myself for my want of moral courage in not denouncing him, by the reflection, that as he had not rendered himself amenable to the law, I might be justified in concealing his intended turpitude. I confess that it was no sentiment of humanity that checked me from informing the physician of what he had done, but simply the selfish dread of exciting his hostility to aid the cupidity that was urging him on to discover my secret, and to make it a profitable speculation.

A bed was made up for my servant in my room, and when I became assured that he was fast asleep, an assurance given in the most convincing, but least agreeable mode imaginable, namely, by his loud snoring, I experienced a sense of relief, and freedom from constraint, that was a positive comfort. Now I could resign myself to slumber, of which I stood so much in need, without the dread that a sordid spy was watching my pillow, and listening with interested and evil intentions to every word that might escape my lips while I slept. It was a positive luxury to feel myself secure to enjoy refreshing sleep; and the disagreeable nasal sounds that unceasingly reminded me of this fact, however unbearable I should have considered them under different circumstances, were now considered only as proofs of my safety from *espionage*. How deep how unbroken were my slumbers that night!

Such was my total prostration of strength, that even imagination and memory remained quiescent, the body being too weak to nourish itself, and not a dream troubled my repose. I awoke refreshed, and was glad to hear my servant still snoring as loudly as when I dropt asleep; and when I called him to procure me the sustenance which my weakened frame required, I listened with satisfaction to his humbly expressed hopes, "that his being such a heavy sleeper, and sometimes rather given to snoring, did not disturb me." He would have been doubtless surprised, had he been told that to these peculiarities so calculated to annoy an invalid, I owed the calm and refreshing sleep I had derived such benefit from.

"Well, Sir," said he, "how some persons do lie! Why, would you believe it, Sir, Figgins, the man who sat up with you at night, said, as how you kept talking in your sleep all night long, so that he could not close them for a minute, and I can declare I never heard you say a single word all the time."

I readily believed the assertion, for I must indeed have had the lungs of a Stentor, to have talked sufficiently loud to have broken the slumber of poor Thomas, who seemed to feel an increased sentiment of attachment towards me in consideration of my not having reproached him for his infirmity of snoring.

"Yes, Sir," observed he, as he opened the shutters and drew back the curtains, "Figgins must be a great story-teller, for when I wanted not to leave you, Sir, at night, when you were so poorly, he said I snored so desperately, that were I to remain in your room, you could not get a wink of sleep; and as he told this tale to the doctor, he insisted that I should not stop in your room at night."

Well did I divine the motive of Figgins wishing to watch me at night, though experience taught me that his statement with regard to the snoring was not untrue.

"I'm glad he's gone, Sir," resumed Thomas, "for of all the prying, inquisitive chaps I ever met, he's the worst. Why, he used to cross-examine me as closely as barristers do a witness in a court of justice, about where you came from, Sir, and every particular about you, and your family affairs; and when he found he could get nothing out of me, he began to question Mary,

and I was obliged to tell her not to gratify his impudent curiosity about what did not concern him."

### CHAPTER XXXI.

In three days after my release from Figgins, my health had so much improved, owing to the refreshing and uninterrupted sleep I had enjoyed, that the doctor consented that I might see my child. The dear little creature was brought to me; and the sight of her black dress and smiling face, as she recognised me, produced an effect on my feelings not to be described.

I was able to be moved to the sofa in the sitting-room, and it was arranged that I was to receive a visit from Mrs. Neville. The thought of this meeting shook my nerves greatly. How many recollections of other and happier days must it awaken in my mind! Our loss had been the same; but she, happily for her, had not a single sin of omission or commission towards her husband with which to reproach herself, while I was bowed down by the consciousness of having by my abstraction and moodiness caused my inestimable wife many hours of anxiety and wretchedness.

When, at the appointed hour, she entered my room, I positively started with astonishment when I beheld her altered appearance. Pale as marble, and reduced almost to a shadow, she was hardly to be recognised by those who had, like me, seen her in the bloom of health and beauty. She approached the sofa on which I reclined, extended her hand, which was so icy cold as to chill mine, and tried to speak, but a tremulous movement of the lips, and a faint and indistinct sound, alone followed the effort. She sank into a chair, and after a silence of many minutes, which I had not the courage to break, she at length found words.

"I have only waited for your convalescence, Mr. Herbert," said she, "to quit Niece. I could not bear to leave the husband of my dear friend, the friend of my—beloved—husband," her agitation increasing as she referred to those so dear to her, "while his life was in danger! Now that Dr. Farrington assures me you are safe, I mean to depart and join my child. If you wish to consign yours to my care, be assured, I will as faithfully fulfil the duties of a mother to her as to my own."

"Thanks, thanks," replied I; "but I have not the courage to part from her. She is now all that remains to me," and here a passionate burst of grief interrupted my words.

"I thought you would be unwilling to part from her," observed Mrs. Neville; "but remember, should circumstances arise that may occasion a change in your sentiments on this point, I will be ever ready to receive her with affection, and to afford her a home with me. Here is my address in England. Let me often hear of your dear child's welfare, and of your own. I offer no attempt at consolation, Mr. Herbert, to a grief like yours, for I too well know how utterly vain

and useless it would be; but recollect, and the recollection will be necessary when the bitterness of regret makes you feel that life has lost its charm, that those whose loss we must ever deplore, have confided a sacred, a solemn trust to us to fulfil—a trust for the sake of which we must vanquish all selfish feelings, and consent to live. And now farewell. May the Almighty grant you resignation to his will, and may you find in your dear child a consolation and a blessing!"

She once more extended her hand to me, and quitted the room, leaving me overpowered by contending emotions, but grateful that I might count on a true friend to my child, while life was spared to this amiable and exemplary woman.

When my child was brought to me every day, I used to gaze on her sweet face, tracing the resemblance to her sainted mother, and listening to her innocent questions. She would chide me when my tears could not be controlled—tell me it was naughty to cry—and then kiss me, and say I must be good.

A melancholy task was now before me, but I feared it not, for it was congenial to my feelings. It was to open different boxes that had belonged to my wife, and to transfer their contents to others, in order to diminish the vast quantity of luggage that had been deemed necessary for her comfort, and that had accumulated during our travels, and to send all that was not required for our use to England.

To perform this task, I had to enter the chamber in which my adored wife had breathed her last, and which had been left precisely in the same state as when she inhabited it. There was the bed on which she had last reposed—the pillow on which her head had last rested. It still bore the impression, and many and bitter were the tears that fell on it as I pressed my lips to the place.

The odor of violets still pervaded the chamber, and all things in it. It was the favorite perfume of my Louisa, the only one she used, and her dresses and handkerchiefs were impregnated with it. This delicate odor, so strongly associated in my mind with her, so fondly loved, so deeply mourned, stole over my senses, awakening agony, and long and bitterly did I weep, before I recovered sufficient calmness to resume the task that had brought me to the room.

There was the chamber just as she had left it, everything speaking to me of her, but where, oh! where was she? Alas! that fair form, that lovely face, on which my eyes had so often gazed with delight, were withering in the cold grave, and her for whom I had thought this chamber not half good enough, was now shut in a narrow coffin! "Fool, fool," thought I, "it is but the mortal coil, the earthly envelope of the bright soul, that is confided to the grave. That clay, over which thou wouldst still drop thy burning tears, would be as insensible to them, as is the dust with which it will soon mingle. The spirit, the immortal soul that animated it, is with its Creator in heaven; and let that be thy consolation. Wouldst thou, ever selfish, ever pining for thine own comfort, presume to wish her, who is now with the Almighty Father, freed from all care, and enjoying the reward of a life of virtue, back on earth, to sut-

fer again the ills to which all of human kind are heirs."

If departed souls were permitted to revisit this earth, to hover near us, to give some sign that we were remembered, even in the regions of the blessed, what a consolation would it be? But this is denied. The Almighty, for His own all-wise purposes, has not thought fit to grant this boon, for which every bereaved and sorrowing heart has longed and prayed in vain, during the first months of the sharp agony of grief.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

I OPENED the wardrobe containing the clothes of my wife. The *robes de chambre* that had last enveloped her fragile form were the first articles that met my view. "Oh, God!" cried I, "that these delicate fabrics can still retain their freshness, when she for whom they were made, who so lately wore them, is mouldering in the grave! Are we not like shadows that flit through life a brief span, to go hence and be no more seen? Life is all unstable! We know not when we shall be called away; we cannot count on a single day of existence."

How many times were the dresses of my departed wife pressed to my lips, and bathed in the tears that fell on them! How many tender recollections did they evoke! "No, never," exclaimed I, "shall these robes be worn by another, save by her child. They shall be kept until she becomes old enough to use them, and I will often look at them, to keep alive in my breast the image of her who wore them, fresh as it now is."

I had not yet ventured out of doors, although my physician was anxious I should try the efficacy of air and exercise to restore my shattered health. His reiterated request on this subject at length induced me to go out to drive, and having ordered the coachman to proceed in the direction recommended by the doctor, I no sooner got out of the sight of the latter than I desired the man to conduct me to the English Cemetery. To that spot my heart had yearned to go ever since I was capable of bearing the exertion. I left the carriage at some distance from the gate, and, with trembling steps, entered the sacred resting-place of the dead. I soon discovered the spot; white marble monuments had been erected over the graves of my adored wife and my lamented friend, by Mrs. Neville, and as I perused the name and age of my Louisa I felt like a culprit, as conscience whispered that I it was who had consigned her, while yet so young, to a premature grave.

How strange, how terrible, are the feelings experienced on beholding, for the first time, the spot that holds the mortal remains of one who was our all of life, our sunshine, our blessing! The conviction of our desolation seems never to have struck us so wholly, so overwhelmingly as now. I sank on the cold earth beside the marble and bathed it with burning tears; I called on the dead, as if she who had ever answered me

with words of love could now hear me; and, forgetful of how unfit I was to die, I prayed for death, to be reunited to her. The sun shone out, and its beams played on the white marble, but I turned from its cheering influence, heart-stricken by the thought, that although it might warm the marble it could not warm the precious deposit it contained. The birds chirruped gaily as they flew from tomb to tomb; but, for the first time in my life, their notes wounded my ear. Why should there be sunshine and notes of joy, when all my sunshine, all my joy, was interred beneath the marble beside me? It seemed unnatural—cruel—and aggravated my sense of misery. I would fain have had the bright luminary of day veil its face in clouds, nature itself put on its gloomiest aspect, the birds forget to sing, and all around become shrouded in darkness, like that which filled my soul.

And must I go hence, and leave her in a foreign grave, her whom in life I could not bear to quit for even a day? And now days, weeks, months, and years may roll on ere I am summoned to take my everlasting rest beside her! I determined that the first step I would take should be to add a codicil to my will, desiring that wherever I might chance to die, my mortal remains should be conveyed to this spot, to be interred by those of my adored wife. How eagerly does the despairing wretch catch at anything, however puerile, that holds out the slightest prospect of even a momentary relief to his woe! The thought of assuring the certainty of being buried on the spot on which I then reclined, seemed to bring the hope of death nearer, and in some sort to console me, though, notwithstanding this hope, I found it difficult to tear myself from the grave of my wife, even when the deepening shades of evening warned me to begone; and I should hardly have found resolution to go, had I not heard the coachman, alarmed at my long absence, entering the cemetery to come in search of me! I could not bear that he should profane the spot by his presence, nor witness my grief; so I turned away with a breaking heart, and, entering the carriage, was driven to my desolate home.

A cheerful fire blazed on the hearth, commanded by my thoughtful physician, lest I should be chilled on going out for the first time after so many weeks' confinement to the house. It gave an air of comfort to the room; and the light from it fell brightly on the ornaments and furniture around. I thought of the deepening gloom of the cemetery, of the cold grave in which my loved one was sleeping; and, giving way to a passionate burst of tears, I rushed into the dark chamber inside, and, flinging myself on my bed, remained there for the night.

And now my doctor became urgent with me to leave Nice. He declared that change of air and scene was absolutely necessary; and that if I did not, without delay, remove, a low nervous fever, which was hanging about me, would certainly grow into a chronic ailment, most direful in its effects. I questioned him, whether such a malady was likely to occasion death. But he shook his head, as if divining the motive of the question, and answered, "No, not death, but a state of suffering to which death would be

infinitely preferable—a state bordering on insanity.”

My own sensations warned me that this might be, for there were moments, nay hours, in which my grief was so overwhelming, that I felt that reason tottered on her throne, and led to a growing desire to abridge, by my own hand, a life that was become insupportable to me. I therefore determined to leave Nice, and my arrangements were just completed; my farewell visit, an agonizing one, paid to the cemetery; when the evening previous to my departure, I received the following letter, in an unknown hand. The signature, however, soon revealed the writer, and as I glanced at it, an instinctive presentiment of evil and danger flashed through my brain.

“Sir,” wrote this vile wretch,—“when I sat up with you during your illness, you let out in your sleep a secret, that you would rather die, I am persuaded, than have known to the world. That secret is in my keeping, and it depends on you whether or not it will remain so. You will easily guess at what I allude, but in case your memory should fail, I will at once go to the point. You, for reasons best known to yourself, but which may easily be surmised, threw your sister-in-law down a precipice, by which she was killed, and you buried her in a cavern. So convinced was I that what you were raving about every night must have some foundation in truth, that when I was dismissed by your doctor, I availed myself of the information I picked up from one of your servants, about where your home was, and set off, regardless of expense and trouble, to Wales, being well convinced my long journey would prove a profitable one. Arrived at Llandovery, I went to your house, made acquaintance with your housekeeper, by representing myself as having lived in your service; informed her of the death of your wife; and, after a few days’ close inquiry as to whether any young lady had ever fallen down a precipice, I discovered that your sister-in-law had *accidentally*, as was believed, met her death in this way, and that it occurred a short time before you were married. It instantly occurred to me, that had her death been purely accidental, why should you, and so long after the matter, too, be continually raving of it, and accusing yourself of having thrown her over the cliff? I will not tell you *all* the discoveries I made. Let it be sufficient to state, that I have found the body, that I have concealed it where you can never discover it, and that if you do not buy my secrecy, I will disclose the whole fact and have the body brought forward, in proof of my assertion. Five hundred pounds will buy my silence, and you shall hear of me no more; but refuse these moderate terms, and I will at once have you arrested as a murderer, and brought to condign punishment. I know you intend leaving Nice to-morrow morning; but go where you will, I will pursue you, and carry my threat into execution.

“I remain yours to command,

“JAMES FIGGINS.

“P. S. I will call for an answer.”

Amazed, confounded, terrified, my senses were overwhelmed by this unexpected blow! I reeled under it, my brain grew dizzy, and reason denied its aid to guide me through the fearful danger that threatened to destroy me. Whichever way I looked, danger beset my path. Exposure, ignominy, and a scaffold, arose in terrific array before me, and no mode of escape, save suicide, presented itself to my agonized brain. I rushed to my chamber, locked the door, tore off my neckcloth, bared my throat, and seized a razor, when, at the moment I opened it, with desperate intent to inflict a deadly wound, the voice of my child crying out, “Papa, papa! mamma is come back!” arrested my hand. I cast the instrument of destruction from me, hastily resumed my neckcloth, opened the door, and found my child in her night-clothes, trembling with cold, outside it. Half frantic, I caught her up in my arms, and wildly pressed her to my heart. “Papa!” said she, “mamma came from heaven to my bedside, and kissed me, when I was asleep, and I awoke, and got out of bed, and ran to tell you, for I knew you would be so glad.”

I dropped into a chair, still clasping my child, that little creature, who had been, through the interposition of the Almighty, my preserver from the terrible sin of suicide—from a felon’s grave!

The alarmed nurse now entered. She had left my child sleeping, while she descended for a night light. The dear creature had dreamt that her blessed mother was returned, and mistaking the dream for reality, had run to tell me the happy tidings, and thus, by a little short of a miracle, had my life been spared. The dear child could not be persuaded that she had not seen her mother. She persisted in asserting it, and maintained that she was sure dear mamma was still behind the curtain of her little bed.

This intervention of Providence made a deep and lasting impression on my mind. When my child was removed from my chamber, I sank on my knees and humbly implored pardon for the terrible sin I had dared to meditate, and offered up prayers that never more might I be tempted to such evil thoughts. My mind was all in a tumult! The reflection that my poor child might now have been an orphan, had not her dream led her to my door, made me tremble, while I owned the goodness of God in having vouchsafed this mercy.

But what was to be done with the wretch who was waiting for my answer to his diabolical letter—to the serpent who had entangled me in his folds? Stunned by the terrible emotions of the last hour, acting on a frame exhausted by mental and bodily suffering, and with a brain maddened by conflicting feelings, a release from the terror inspired by the vile man who menaced me seemed the object in life the most desirable at that tremendous crisis—I had lost the power of reasoning. I could not see the possibility of proving my innocence of actual guilt against his nefarious charge; and in a moment of madness I sent him a cheque for the sum demanded—and thus sealed my doom, by admitting the truth of his assertion.



placed myself in the power of a fiend, whence never more could I extricate myself, and the sum paid to secure his secrecy would furnish the terrible proof of supposed guilt. Yet that night I slept more calmly than for many a previous one. Thus have human beings been known to dance over a volcano ready to explode and destroy them.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

I ~~awoke~~ the next morning in a very different frame of mind. The folly, the madness in having yielded to the threats of the villain Figgins now struck me so forcibly, that I could hardly comprehend how I could have perpetrated it.

A night's calm and refreshing slumber, the first enjoyed for a long time, had produced such a salutary effect on my nerves, that the menaces which had the previous night almost irritated me to insanity, by filling me with terror, were now looked upon in quite another point of view. Such is the weakness of man, and so do his actions depend on the state of his nervous system!

Now, when it was too late, I could see and intensely feel, the terrible false step I had taken, and writhe in agony when reflecting on the consequences it would inevitably entail. I loathed my own moral pusillanimity, which, instead of leading me to resist the demand made on me by a scoundrel, whose menaces I should have, in common policy, defied, induced me to comply with it, and by so doing, place me for ever in his power. Yes, now, indeed, had I signed my own condemnation—henceforth must I feel myself the slave of a villain. Why had it not occurred to me when I got the demand, to send off at once for the doctor, and tell him of it? He was a sensible, as well as a kind man, much esteemed by the civil authorities of Nice; and had I appealed to him, there was little doubt that he would have extricated me from the clutches of the wretch who meant to make me the prey to his mercenary scheme of extortion.

The artful plot would have been nipped in the bud. The representations of the villain Figgins would have been received as a vile calumny, hatched to work on the fears of a nervous invalid; and my courage in exposing it would not only have had the best effect as a proof of my innocence of the charge, but would also have defeated any future scheme of him who sought to extort money from me.

How well, how clearly, could I *now* see all this, although the previous night I could see nothing but ruin, urging me on to suicide, in order to escape exposure! O God! how could it have been that my reason was so wholly prostrated, that fear, base, ignoble fear, should thus have conquered me! It *now* was evident to me that the threats of Figgins were founded on no more stable basis than that created by his own suspicions. My ravings had excited these; he journeyed to Wales to discover some cause for them—had found that my sister-

in-law had been supposed to fall down a precipice, and having thus ascertained that a *part* of my expressions uttered in sleep bore reference to that sad event, he concluded that those relative to interring the dead in a cavern, must also bear reference to a fact, and thus built up his accusation on surmise. It was clear that had he pushed his inquiries further, he would have learned that the young lady was buried (as was generally believed) in the vault of my family; and, consequently, would not have searched for the body in the cavern. But working on my fears, he had made the experiment of asserting that he had found the body, an assertion which I now felt firmly persuaded was utterly false, but which my insanity in crediting would confirm him in his suspicions. Oh, the agony of reflecting on all this, and despising myself while I did so!

Now was I well aware that had I defied Figgins, and sought protection of the law from the knavery he was practising against me, I must have succeeded in crushing his attempt at extortion; and as I examined and closely sifted every circumstance connected with that fatal event, which had so darkly colored my fate, I felt assured that nothing to criminate me could have been brought forward. It could have been proved that I had never beheld the young lady, of whose death I was accused of having been guilty. My worthy housekeeper, and other servants, could have borne evidence that I had not left my chamber that night, until summoned from my bed, where indisposition retained me, by the servant of Mrs. Maitland; I had joined him in search of the missing young lady, at the risk of my life. Even had the body buried in the cavern been exhumed and identified as that of Miss Maitland, how could it be proved that I had interred it there? nothing but my incoherent ravings, uttered when under the influence of delirium, occasioned by a brain fever, could be produced to connect me with the circumstance, and even this could only be adduced against me by Figgins, whose unsupported testimony would have no weight.

How strange and incomprehensible did it now appear, that never previously did this same mode of examination occur, or if it did, never did it produce the same satisfactory effect on my reason. A film that had hitherto obscured my sight, and prevented my beholding all the circumstances of the case in their true colors, seemed to drop from my eyes! Good God! had I for years been blind! Had I borne hours, days, weeks, months, of torture, and only now learned to reason calmly, sensibly on facts? Could it have been proved, even had the body in the cavern been brought to light, that when I had seen, and caused the other corpse to be interred in my family vault, I could have known that it was *not* that of the person missing, whom I had never seen; and even if I had, would not the state of decomposition in which it was, have prevented the possibility of recognition? Had not the clothes of the dead been burned before my arrival, and had I not brought the nurse with me to identify the body? Yes, I was secure, perfectly secure from the danger

menaced by the vile Figgins, had I not, from moral cowardice, placed myself in the snare he had planned to entrap me.

I groaned in agony, as the truth now appeared before me divested of all the terrors with which formerly my alarmed fancy and shattered nerves had clothed it, but which at present reason proved to me I, and I alone, had rendered dangerous by yielding to the menaces of Figgins. And I had embittered the life of my adored Louisa, aye, had shortened it, by the moodiness, the misery, I could not hide from her, when by the exercise of my reason I might have seen that I had nothing to dread from discovery, and when I knew myself to be perfectly innocent of any intention to injure her, whose death I had unfortunately caused.

But the same lucidness of intellect which enabled me now to see that all the terrors which had assailed me during so long a period, rendering existence almost a burden, had been groundless, displayed, oh, how vividly! the danger I had brought on myself by buying the silence of Figgins—I felt that henceforth I must unresistingly submit to his extortions.

To brave him hereafter, armed as he was with the proof of my conscious guilt, would be impossible; and as I gloomily looked forward to a prolonged existence, over which this villain could hold a power, which, like the sword, suspended by a hair over the head of Damocles, might, at any moment, fall on me, I longed for death! What was I to do?—where was I to escape from my tormentor? Had I even paid the five hundred pounds he had extorted from me in money, direct from my hand to his, no proof could be brought forward of the fact, except his assertion, which I could deny; but no!—as if to affix the seal to my own ruin, I had given the wretch a cheque on my banker at Nice, whose books could always serve as evidence on this point. And how explain the having given a man, who had been only for a short time employed as a servant in my family, so large a sum of money? What credible motive could I assign? Never did a barrister, engaged to defend a client, whose case was desperate, examine with a cooler, a more searching eye the evidence to be produced against him, than I now did my own case; becoming every moment more firmly convinced that I had furnished the only evidence that could injure, and that must one day, sooner or later, destroy me.

Could it be borne that I was to hold immunity from the consequences of implied guilt, only by continuing to pay the heavy price exacted for it by the wretch who held me in thrall? Would not the facility with which I had yielded to his extortion, induce him to levy it again and again, until he had wrung from me the fortune of my child, and left me a beggar? The thought of destroying this man here crossed my mind; and I, who had in all my misery, found consolation in reflecting, that whatever I might suffer, I was innocent of intentional guilt, now contemplated murder; nay, was ready to commit it, could I find a safe opportunity. But how was this to be found?

Aye, there was the point; and I coned over

every possible chance in which my personal security might not be endangered by the crime I meditated. Could I not seek a secret interview in some retired spot with my enemy, and, armed with a pistol, shoot him through the head? Then came the recollection that I had no pistol, nor indeed any weapon of destruction; and to go out and buy one might excite suspicion, for probably every place where guns or pistols could be bought would be examined, after a man had been shot, in order to discover to whom any had been sold. This project must, therefore, be abandoned for the present at least; and who knows, whispered Hope, but that death, a natural death, involving me in no guilt, may release me from him? He, no more than others, bears no charmed life. One of the same casualties may end his days that so frequently abridge those of other men. Let me, therefore, not despair, at least not until he renews his demands; and let me seek some distant spot, where he may lose the clue to discover my abode.

What a fearful abyss in the heart of man! Even that of one not naturally prone to evil! No sooner is his personal safety involved in danger, than he who would under other circumstances shrink with instinctive horror from committing crime, begins to contemplate it without disgust or dismay.—And I, who would not injure aught that had life, who would recoil with pity from witnessing human suffering; could now meditate depriving a fellow-creature of life, and ardently desire an opportunity of accomplishing this sinful project!

Let no man hereafter say, "this or that crime would I not perpetrate." Or, if such confidence in one's own integrity may ever be indulged, it can only appertain to him who has been brought up in the love and fear of God; who is prepared to bear every trial with which it may please Providence to afflict him, rather than forfeit the blessing, the inestimable blessing, of a quiet conscience, and the trust that he is walking in the path in which he should tread. Many are those who have passed through life unconscious of their own weakness, and who, because they have not been tempted, believe they would not have fallen. Let such, with humility, return thanks to the Almighty, that they have not been tried, and learn to pity their less fortunate brethren.

The more I reflected on my culpable weakness, the more did I begin to doubt my own sanity. This doubt was my sole refuge from a growing self-contempt that was corroding my mind; for it was less mortifying to believe that my intellects must have been impaired, than to think myself the moral coward which my conduct towards Figgins would imply.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

I left Nice next morning, after taking leave of my good doctor, in answer to whose inquiries

of where I intended to direct my course, I stated that it was my intention to proceed to the north of Italy, where I should probably remain a considerable time. To countenance this misrepresentation, made solely with a view to mislead Figgins, I proceeded to Turin, whence I meant to journey to Naples, hoping that I might sojourn there some time, free from the dread of being followed by my evil genius, for such did I now consider this wretch to be. How did I miss my adored Louisa, when I again took possession of the carriage she had been wont to occupy with me!

Every contrivance that had been arranged in it for her comfort brought a pang to my heart; and as I gazed on the front glasses that used to reflect her beautiful face, I almost expected again to behold it. My own pale and care-worn countenance alone met my view, and my sable habiliments increased its death-like pallor. My child and her nurse occupied one of the front seats; my lost wife's maid had returned to England with Mrs. Neville. Often would my little girl draw me from a gloomy reverie by calling "papa and mamma;" and the nurse would shake her head, and hold up her hand in reproof; but I ordered that she should not be checked in speaking of her mother, and the dear child, pleased with this freedom from the constraint imposed on her, kept continually uttering the word "mamma," generally adding, to it, "Mamma is gone to Heaven."

My grief had been rudely broken in upon by the terror occasioned by the wretch Figgins. That so solemn, so sacred a sentiment should be crossed by the ignoble one of fear, and of fear too of such a low villain, maddened me. I hated him with an intensity which no words could express; but alas! I equally feared him, for I was but too well aware that by my own wild terror I had placed my fate in his vile hands. To find myself in some retired spot, where I could, free from interruption, abandon myself to the grief that was now consuming me, appeared to be the natural aim of my tortured heart! While I could conjure up by memory the image of my departed wife, could recall her sweet voice, her beautiful smile, and her fond words, I seemed still to retain something of her, something that pacified, that consoled. I tasted "the luxury of woe," the sole enjoyment left to the heart-stricken mourner. But when this indulgence was denied; when a terror, for feeling which I despised, I loathed myself, took possession of me, profaning the shrine where only the sainted image of my Louisa should be, I became hopeless, miserable—lost in gloomy abstraction, from which even the voice of my child sometimes could not draw me; I was insensible to all around; I noticed not the scenery through which I passed; I cared not whither I went. Morose and silent, sunshine or gloom alike failed to attract my notice.

A return of indisposition detained me several days at Turin, and my servant, alarmed, sent off for a physician. This gentleman, luckily for me, was an intelligent, as well as a humane man. He soon perceived that my disease was *more of the mind than of the body*; and having *learnt from my servant the heavy affliction I had*

lately sustained, applied himself to soothe and calm my irritated nerves, endeavoring, by every means in his power, to divert my thoughts from self, and the chagrin that was preying on me.

Dr. Martelli possessed extensive information, with a facility of imparting it seldom granted. He was at once a Christian and a philosopher; and the charity prompted by the influence of the tenets of the first, was ably supported by the philanthropy and wisdom which he had acquired in the school of the second. He excited my interest; directed it to scientific subjects requiring a more than ordinary attention; led me on to examine theories and systems to which I had never previously turned my thoughts; made me consult the best books on these subjects, sent me from his own well-stored library; and so judiciously treated me, that ere I had been more than a fortnight under his care I felt better. He used to come and spend the evenings with me, revealing the treasures of his noble mind, and keeping my poor one so occupied, as to leave me unconscious of the flight of time.

I could not, before I had experienced the advantage, have believed it was possible such a salutary effect could be produced on me by any human being; but now I was ready to admit, that if God, for His own wise purposes, permits such wretches as Figgins to cross our path in life, He who gave the bane, bestows the antidote in such men as Dr. Martelli! What an expansive mind was his! How full of pity for mankind, and how desirous to ameliorate its condition! With great sensibility, reason so well regulated its impulses, that he was never its dupe. He analysed his own feelings as closely and correctly as he would the causes and effects of the maladies he was called in to relieve; and this habit and power of self-analysis enabled him to administer consolation to the minds of those intrusted to his care while applying remedies to the body.

Had I not feared to remain so near Nice, I would have continued my abode at Turin; but the communication between the two places was too direct, and too frequent, to permit me to feel comfortable while within the reach of Figgins; so I proceeded on my route to Naples, leaving my new friend, for such he had in truth become, with unfeigned regret.

My mind had in some degree recovered its tone, although a deep melancholy still pervaded it. Mine was not a grief to be soon vanquished, but it had become more calm, more reflective. It formed a part of myself; I wished not to lose it, for I should have considered it nothing less than a sin of ingratitude to cease to mourn for my lost Louisa. My child, too, now began to be an object of interest and pleasure to me, and the more so, that her resemblance to her departed mother seemed to increase every day. I loved to trace the likeness, and the dear little creature, encouraged by my fondness, became even more familiar with me than with her nurse. She had all her mother's sweetness of temper, and gentle nature, which was revealed whenever anything occurred that might have irritated a child with a less placid disposition; yet she possessed a degree of sensibility seldom met with in one so docile and equal tempered. Before we reached

Naples, she had so endeared herself to me, that I could hardly bear her out of my sight; and she, dear child, was never so happy as when with me.

Dr. Martelli had given me a letter of introduction to an old friend of his at Naples, a man of great erudition, and owner of one of the best libraries there. He had described this friend as a *savant*, devoted to literary and scientific pursuits, who mingled rarely, if ever, in the busy world, but who would be sure to receive with kindness any person recommended to his notice by him. I was almost tempted not to call and leave the letter. I dreaded making a new acquaintance that might draw me into others; but recollecting the advantage I had derived from Dr. Martelli's society, I conquered my repugnance, and left his letter and my card at the door of Il Signor Bertucci.

I had taken up my abode at the Victoria Hotel, and had been so fortunate as to secure a sitting room commanding a view of the Bay, and of the Villa Reale. The weather was beautiful; a cloudless sky, as blue as it was ever represented in those *aquarelle* drawings, so highly tinted as to make one doubt of their accuracy, was reflected on the unruffled bosom of the sea, which resembled a vast lake; and so joyous, so beautiful was the scene that I beheld from my window, so genial the air, that even I for a few minutes was sensible of its influence, and acknowledged that the description of the charms of Naples which I had hitherto believed to be exaggerated, did not exceed the reality. To the right of the hotel rose an amphitheatre of steep tuffa rocks, seen above the stately dwellings of the Chiaja, crowned with picturesque buildings, intermixed with gardens and groves.

The Chateau St. Elmo, with its turrets and spires, was conspicuous; and extending from it were the green heights of the beautiful villas of the Floridiana and Belvedere, with their stately terraces glittering in the sun; and beyond them the convent-crowned steep of the Camaldoli. The Villa Reale, separating the Chiaja from the sea, which laves its wall, with all its flowering plants and rare trees, lay in front; while in the distance were seen the Isles of Ischia and Procida, set as sparkling jewels in the azure sea. In the middle of the bay, Capri rose as a giant, to protect its entrance; and to the left, lay the coast of Castelamare, and the heights of the vine-covered Sorrento. I gazed on this scene of enchantment until, half intoxicated by its bewildering beauty, I closed my eyes. And then came the reflection of, where was she who would have shared my rapture at this view? and tears started to them.

Oh! if she who was sleeping in her far-off grave, could be restored to me, what more on earth could I desire? but wanting her to share my pleasure, an aching void was felt in my heart, and I arose and left the window. My child was at that moment led into the room by her nurse, and after embracing me, she would have me take her to the window I had so lately quitted. She looked around for some time in speechless pleasure, and then clapping her little hands joyously, exclaimed, "Oh, how pity! how pity!" Even while partaking the repast prepared for

her, she kept continually turning her eyes to the window, uttering, "Papa, how pity!" to the evident surprise and satisfaction of the waiter, who had rarely, perhaps never, seen a child so young, sensible of the beauty of the view from the Victoria. This enthusiasm was not shared by the nurse, who seemed no more moved by the dazzling scene, than if she were contemplating a turnpike road, of the most ordinary description, while she observed to me, "Miss Herbert, I am afraid, Sir, is not quite well, she has been very restless and fidgetty ever since she has been in the hotel, and I suspect she is a little feverish, for she wants to be at the window, which shows she requires air."

If the pure atmosphere and exquisite beauty of the scene before me surprised and delighted me by day, it was no less lovely by night; for no sooner had the short twilight, which falls so suddenly, and fades into night so rapidly, disappeared, than the moon, bright as "one entire and perfect chrysolite," arose in unclouded radiance, its beams quivering on the rippling bosom of the blue sea, and silvering the objects around.

The lights from the windows of the lofty buildings that front the bay and crown the range of the amphitheatre, that forms the back ground, fell like columns of bright gold across the silver-tinged undulations of the calm sea, giving it a most brilliant and wonderful effect. Boats filled by gay parties, whence the sweet sounds of music were wafted to the shore, dotted the bay, casting their dark shadows like little islets on its bright surface, while the phosphorescent lights produced by every stroke of the oars gave the whole scene an almost magical effect. I gazed, marvelling at its beauty, but my mind was not attuned to the scene; and those before whom, when bowed down by sorrow, some brilliant exhibition is suddenly presented, can alone sympathize in my feelings as I did so. It was like a jar of discord in the midst of harmony, and I turned from it in increased gloom.

And there were hundreds contemplating, with pleasure, that bright and ever-moving picture which awakened only sad thoughts in me! Alas! to enjoy such sights the mind must be tranquil, the heart content. The mourners bearing their loved dead to the grave, turn not with a keener pang from the encounter of a joyous throng of vociferous merry-makers, than I did from the exhilarating prospect commanded from the window of the Victoria, and the sounds of light laughter from the gay crowds passing beneath it.

The next morning, before I had finished my breakfast, Il Signor Bertucci was announced. He had, as he told me, come to offer his services as a cicerone, adding, with urbanity, that he entertained so high an esteem, and so warm a friendship for Doctor Martelli, that he would feel pleasure in being useful to any one recommended to his acquaintance by him.

Signor Bertucci was tall and slight, appeared to be about fifty years old, had a high and intellectual brow, around which, a few locks, tinged with silver, clustered, and had that paleness of complexion peculiar to studious men. I never saw a more benevolent expression of countenance, nor met with a more pleasing manner.

The ease of a well-bred man of the world, was mingled with a certain gravity that proved he was a thoughtful character. I felt a strong prepossession in his favor before we had spent half an hour together, and accepted his offer to conduct me to the Musée Borbonico. The nurse, as was her habit, brought my little girl into the room, to see me before I went out, and had I not previously been disposed to like my new acquaintance, the interest which he immediately conceived for her, would have achieved the conquest of my good-will.

"It is only when I behold children like this," said he, "that I regret not having married. My youth was so devoted to study, that I feared a bookworm like myself would have made but a sorry husband to a fair wife. Women, and more especially the youthful and handsome, expect to engross a greater portion of their husbands' time than a studious man would be disposed to give. Hence disappointment would ensue, and consequences result which I never had courage to contemplate, so I am now a solitary old man, instead of being like you, Sir, a happy father. To educate a creature like this," and he patted my little Frances' head, "to train her mind, and to see it expand, must be a source of the most enviable happiness."

The child, as if she could comprehend his kind feelings, smiled in his face, and extended her hands towards him, and when he took her up in his arms held her rosy lips to his to be kissed.

"The Romans," said he, "ages ago pronounced the English to be angels, when they first saw them at Rome; and looking on this beautiful child, I feel disposed to agree with the Romans in opinion, for I never saw so lovely a creature. How cold, how cheerless seems the life of a solitary recluse, shut up with his musty tomes, when compared with the ever increasing interest of such a companion as this. You smile, Sir, but an intelligent child is the most interesting companion in the world."

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

FORTUNATE was it for me, that I made the acquaintance of Il Signor Bertucci, for my mind, not strong enough to lean on itself, required companionship with one of a more vigorous calibre to sustain it, and prevent its subsiding into the moodiness to which it was prone. Constitution and temperament have much influence in forming the character of man. My health, never robust, had become uncertain, and every disease made a more serious impression on it than on that of others, while such was the nervousness of my temperament that I shrank from general society, with an innate dread, lest in it some might await me.

Nothing is more calculated to convey an unfavorable impression of a man than his avoid-

ance of society. There ever enters some portion of wounded *amour-propre*, in the opinions men pronounce on those who are unwilling to form acquaintance with them, and consequently their strictures are never charitable.

At Signor Bertucci's, I met several of my countrymen, who eagerly sought his acquaintance, so general was the appreciation of his erudition and urbanity, and who, perceiving his good will towards me, were willing to accept mine, on trust of his well known high reputation. An unconquerable timidity on my part, led to my holding back from their advances, and every acquaintance thus avoided, became from that hour, a secret, if not an avowed enemy.

"I must," some of them said, "know that there was something against me, or would not betray such extraordinary coldness to my own countrymen." They could discover no reason why *their* acquaintance should not be readily accepted, but they were ready to divine why *mine*, notwithstanding their having sought it, might be objectionable. Others accused me of an insolent *hauteur* which merited correction; but none suspected that delicate health, joined to constitutional shyness and reserve, were the sole causes of my avoidance of them. There happened to be some three or four English noblemen at that time at Naples, and they were appealed to by these gentlemen, to declare whether they had ever known me in England, or heard anything to my disadvantage there. Their avowal that they did not know me was received by their compatriots as nothing short of a proof of my unworthiness.

Not to have the honor of the acquaintance of such distinguished noblemen argued that I must be some very obscure individual, who, conscious of his own demerits, naturally shrank from forming acquaintanceship with those who might be so condescending as to make advances to him. All this, and much more, was insinuated to the Signor Bertucci in a mode very likely to have prejudiced him against me; but he, like his countrymen in general, was little disposed to listen to slander, whether openly expressed or cautiously insinuated. He shrugged his shoulders, told my enemies that his friend Dr. Martelli would never have introduced an unworthy acquaintance to him, and continued to treat me with a kindness of which I was deeply sensible.

"Your countrymen, Mr. Herbert," said he to me one day, after we had grown into habits of closer intimacy, "are strange people. I suppose that their tempers are soured by the frequent changes in your climate so injurious to the nerves, for I have known many, and never met above two or three who were not disposed to decry each other. If acquainted, they have told me such spiteful things; and if not, have formed such severe, and often unjust, conclusions of those they met. They expose all the faults they detect, assailing their possessors with poignant ridicule, while to the unknown they attribute all imaginable evil. What can be the cause of this, if your northern climate be not to blame? I have been acquainted with several Englishmen, and found them sensible, well-informed, and agreeable, when I met only one at a time; but the mo-

ment a second appeared in the field, the good qualities of both became immediately deteriorated. *Hauteur*, reserve, and dislike marked their manner; and I have discovered afterwards, that no other cause existed for the exercise of these disagreeable indications of *mauvais goût*, than that they were not of the same politics, had not been brought up in the same university, did not live in the same clique, or did not hunt with the same hounds. Strange causes, *n'est-ce pas*, for dislike? and strangers, observing their manner of treating each other, would very naturally be led to conclude that one, if not both the individuals, had committed some action that ought to exclude him from society.

"Your countrymen are considered proud; but the peculiarity of decrying each other, to which I have referred, induces me to think that, *au contraire*, they are deficient in pride; that is, at least, national pride, which is, perhaps, the only pardonable one. What can be a surer indication of this, than the way in which they expose the defects, known or suspected, of each other? Now, we Italians endeavor to conceal the errors of our fellow countrymen. If we know no good of them, we abstain from attributing evil; and when we meet those with whom we are unacquainted, we treat them with the same civility we should exercise towards any other gentleman in society; and are really pained to hear anything said to their disadvantage before strangers, thinking it may give a bad impression of our country. How often has it occurred to me to hear one Englishman say, 'O! so you know Mr. A. or B.?' and I have answered, 'Yes, I have that pleasure.'

"You call it a pleasure, do you?"

"And a sarcastic smile passes over the lips of the speaker.

"Yes, I really think it a pleasure, for he is well-informed and agreeable."

"Indeed! I was not aware of this."

"And the gentleman draws up his head, and looks supercilious.

"Perhaps you are not well acquainted with him?"

"No, I have not that honor; and, to say the truth, I do not desire it."

"And he looks more contemptuous than before.

"If not an indiscretion, may I venture to inquire if you know anything to his disadvantage?"

"Why, perhaps not positively so, but he is a person not belonging to my circle."

"He might possibly, if questioned, say that you did not belong to his," said I.

"But as mine is far superior to his—in fact, mine is the exclusive circle, he could not say, that is, he could not think himself as well placed in society."

"But, pardon my ignorance, do tell me what constitutes the difference of the two circles?"

"The difference is perfectly defined by us, but to a foreigner I really can hardly make it understood. The exclusive to which I appertain are a set of men of high birth, good fortune, and certain pretensions to *savoir vivre*, which are acknowledged by the *haut ton*. We draw around us a *cordon sanitaire*, which we permit not to be

passed. We live together, frequent the same clubs, dine at the same houses, pay our court to the same women, reside in the same quarter of the town, and vote all whom we do not admit into our *coterie*, to be quite of another grade in society."

"But is it not the extreme of injustice, first to exclude men, and then blame them for the exclusion?"

"How, without exclusion, could we keep our circle sufficiently select?"

"Does talent, fortune, or station, ever induce you to give an *entrée* to this circle of yours?"

"Not often; and never until the individual possessing any of these advantages has been recognised by the world in general, and by the world of fashion in particular, as being worthy of this distinction."

"And when you meet in foreign lands a fellow-countryman, who belongs not to your circle at home, you avoid him, even though you may know him to be a perfect gentleman?"

"Most decidedly, for were we to form any acquaintance with him abroad, we should be compelled to leave him off in London."

"What, if you found him clever, agreeable, and amiable?"

"Yes, for otherwise we should have all our clique inquiring, 'Where on earth did you pick up that strange man? Has your new friend a house?' 'I dare say he lives at the other side of Oxford street, and thinks the denizens of Portman square and Portland place 'vastly genteel!'" This is what our set would say, and end by entreating one not to introduce the strange man to them."

"And pray what is the harm of living at the other side of Oxford street, in Portman square, or Portland place? May a man not live where he pleases in London?"

"Not if he wishes to belong to the best society, that is to the exclusive—*par exemple*, to mine. We live in certain parts of London, and vote all who inhabit the places which we reject, bores—vulgar—*mauvais ton en fin*."

"But can the street or square in which a man resides, change his character or claims on society?"

"Not his character, but certainly his position."

"Such, Signor Herbert, have been the reasons often given to me by some of your countrymen for avoiding the acquaintance of others of their own nation, men, I assure you, whom I have found clever, well-informed, and perfectly gentleman-like."

I confessed to Signor Bertucci that I had mixed little in society in England, and had very few acquaintances. Indeed none among the aristocracy, because it had so fallen out that I had never met any of that class, and even if I had, my station in life, that of a private country gentleman of small fortune, living in a very secluded part of Wales, must have prevented my making any advances towards persons so much my superiors in rank and fortune.

"You were right, Sir," observed he. "Unequal positions in life present a great obstacle to agreeable association. The great expect a cer-

tain homage from those beneath them in station, a homage which a man of independent mind, and conscious of his own worth and respectability, would seldom be disposed to offer to mere rank or fortune. Every man is best in the circle in which his birth and merit has placed him, where *he* is not compelled to look up, nor his associates obliged to look down."

"Often did my new friend come and spend his evenings with me at the Victoria hotel, and still more frequently did I pass mine in his home. Together we constantly visited the Musée Borbonico, and inspected the treasures it contained. He was deeply skilled in antiquarian lore, and loved to make his knowledge of it available to others. He was a patient investigator of all connected with his favorite study, but maintained none of the fanciful hypotheses, in which so many antiquaries indulge,—hypotheses that, instead of elucidating the subjects, much more frequently tend to involve them in doubt. He could, from the extent of his researches, as readily class the age to which any object or work of art belonged, as an able geologist could ascertain by the different strata of lava found at Pompeii, which of the various eruptions that have visited that ancient town, had deposited it. Nor was his knowledge confined to the lore of the ancients. Perfectly conversant with the history of the middle ages, he was no less skilled in the interesting memorials they have left behind.

A mind so filled with knowledge, and so ready to bring forth its stores for the advantage of others, afforded me a source of instruction and pleasure, kept my thoughts from dwelling on the grief that still preyed on my heart. There it lay, slumbering occasionally it is true, but often awaking; and, like a child on first being aroused from sleep, demanding the object that had been dearest.

Signor Bertucci accompanied me to the interesting environs of Naples, was my Cicerone at Herculaneum and Pompeii, and made me acquainted with all concerning them. It was when contemplating these celebrated places, so long hidden from the world, that my grief was least bitterly felt. I was reminded of the brevity of life and human suffering, as I gazed on the wrecks of ages before me,—wrecks that have so long survived the beings who had raised, who had inhabited them. As well, thought I, might we be inconsolable for some beloved friend who sets out on a journey some time before we can follow to join him, as sorrow as I have done for that most beloved one, whom I may soon be summoned to join. What are we but fleeting shadows, that glide away, and in as short a time forgotten, as the flowers that droop and fade, ere autumn has passed! But the sunshine—the gaiety of Naples, and its joyous denizens, produced only dissonance in my feelings; so, having seen all most worthy of attention in it, I proceeded to Palermo, deeply regretting Signor Bertucci, from whose society I had derived so much consolation and instruction.

My child was now my constant companion. The genial clime of Italy had operated on her frame and mind, as on the plants confided to its soil. She had grown rapidly; her health was *more vigorous, and her young intellect expand-*

*ed, as a flower opens its petals to the smile of the sun.* She noticed everything novel around her; would listen with delight to the songs of the sailors, as our vessel floated over the blue Mediterranean, and would clap her hands with transport, when she beheld the sun-beams playing on its bosom. "That child has already the temperament of a poet," had Signor Bertucci often observed, when he noticed the pleasure she took in objects seldom remarked by children. "I can behold it," has he said, "revealing itself as light does through a vase of alabaster. May it tend to her happiness, and the restoration of yours! We live again in those dear to us, after our own hopes have been dashed to the earth; and you, my friend, will once more be able to endure sunshine, when you witness the delight it gives your daughter."

Often have I prayed, that the cares and sorrows that had fallen on my head might avert misfortune from my child. Nay, it soothed me to think that as a certain portion of misery must be dealt out to mortals, in the large one that had fallen to my share had been included that meant for my offspring. I would watch over her whilst she slumbered, keep off the flies and mosquitoes from her pillow, observe every change in her lovely face, listen to her soft breathing, and murmur blessings when she smiled. She seemed every day to grow more like her lost mother, and this increasing resemblance made me dote on her still more. She, too, loved me fondly,—was never so happy as when seated on my knee, her head nestling in my breast, or her dear dimpled arms twined around my neck. Even the sailors as well as the passengers took a fancy to the dear little creature, she was so sweet tempered, and so lively. Every one had a smile and a kind word for her, which she failed not to recognise by kissing her hand, and nodding to them when they passed. A doting mother never felt more pride at seeing her child admired, than I did at witnessing the homage offered to mine. She was now the sole object of interest to me in life,—the only possession of which I could be proud. No wonder then that I loved her with all the intensity of passion peculiar to a nature like mine,—that she became my idol!

Arrived at Palermo, its picturesque beauty, even though seen after that of Naples, struck me with surprise and admiration. Being so much less frequented by strangers, too, than the city I had left, I felt that I should be more at my ease here, and I rejoiced that I had come, though I still regretted leaving the Signor Bertucci, and could not hope to meet at Palermo so accomplished an acquaintance, or so kind a friend. Determined to make some stay in this beautiful place, I engaged a small but charming villa, in the vicinity of the very fine one of the Prince Butera, and, in a few days, was comfortably established in it, assisted by the banker to whom my letter of credit was addressed, and who procured me the villa on much more moderate terms than I could.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE interest awakened in my mind by the society of Signor Bertucci led me to a course of reading that filled up many hours of the day; and when I laid down my book, I would devote some time to my little daughter, whose intelligence afforded me a never-failing source of pride and gratification. The novelty of the scenes around me, awakening new trains of thought, and the habit of reading I had lately acquired, proved so salutary a medicine for my diseased and morbid mind, that I began to taste the blessings still left me, and to look back on the past as a troublous dream. Had this love of reading possessed me during the first year of my marriage, what a difference might it not have produced in my fate, by withdrawing my attention from the one sad subject of my incessant contemplation. Unfortunate must that man be who has no fixed occupation, and who seeks not to give himself that most delightful of all—study. The mind must be employed, or it reacts, and becomes a prey to every chagrin that assails it. Ask the mourner when bowed down by grief, whence he has derived relief, and he must confess that study alone afforded it. The pleasures of society, the gaieties of life, but aggravate the pangs of regret; but the solitude of a quiet room, and a book that engrosses the thoughts, offer a balm that with time brings consolation, without banishing that pensive memory of those we have lost, which we should hate ourselves were we not to cherish it. And yet when reading the works that most interested me, often have I laid them down with a sense of painful regret, that she to whom my memory constantly reverted had never shared with me the new gratification I had discovered. How would it have sweetened many of those long and wretched hours when, wholly absorbed by gloomy reflections on the past, I was laying up a store of future misery! for the habit of indulging such, grows on the unhappy individual who gives way to it, until, his feelings rendered morbid, he becomes wretched himself, and is the cause of wretchedness to others. My beloved Louisa, too, had a natural taste for reading, and had I encouraged it, would have been solaced by having her thoughts drawn away from painful subjects. How many hours might I not thus have snatched from care, and what a new bond of sympathy might I not have established between us, by the perusal of the same works, the cultivation of the same tastes.

The banker to whom my letter of credit was addressed, invited me to his house, and introduced me to two or three English merchants established at Palermo, who were desirous of showing attention to me as their countryman. They were sensible, well-disposed men, wholly occupied in making money, and consoled for present devotion to business, and the sacrifice it entailed, by the prospect of returning to their native land some years hence, when a sufficient fortune had been amassed, to satisfy their notions of comfort. They had already passed many years at Palermo, and the snowy locks that shaded their furrowed brows denoted that they had turned the sunny side of life, and made a

considerable progress in the descent of that hill, at whose base lies the open grave that awaits them. Nevertheless, they were talking with vivacity of future plans, when they should be enabled to leave off the toil for gold, and return to enjoy the remnant of their days in England. They had lived in the admirable climate and beneath the cloudless skies of Sicily, until habit had pallied the sense of the blessings bestowed by both, and looked forward with pleasure to the cold and cheerless clime of their native land, the disagreeableness of which they had forgotten in their long absence from it. They thought not that habit had rendered the mild and genial atmosphere they had now so long and thanklessly enjoyed, necessary for their health, and that, arrived at the winter of life, that country to which they longed to return was little suited to warm the blood chilled by age, or to enliven the spirits depressed from the same cause.

"Strange!" said Mr. Mitford, one of these English merchants to me, "when we first came here, my wife and I were enchanted with Palermo; the constant sunshine, the clear and light atmosphere, and the gaiety of the people delighted us. But now we are tired of all this, and long to exchange it for England. That is the country in which to sit down and expend the fortune acquired elsewhere. There a man is valued for his wealth; here, no one cares what his fortune may be. He is not a bit more valued for it, for the necessaries, nay, even the luxuries of life are so cheap, that those who do not possess one quarter of his wealth can enjoy as many comforts as he does, and he has not even the pleasure of knowing that he is envied for his riches. Now, in England every one knows when a man is wealthy, and more still, people are always prone to magnify his fortune, and to treat him with the consideration it inspires. The necessities of life are dear, and the luxuries unattainable except by the rich, so that a wealthy man knows that he is in the possession of many advantages denied to the less fortunate than himself. The rarity of sunshine, and the frigidity of the climate, induce him to adopt all appliances to atone for the absence of the one, and the chilliness of the other. When a man is sunning himself in a beautiful conservatory into which the windows of his sitting rooms open, and is warmed by a *calorifère* diffusing warmth and equal temperature around his dwelling, he need not regret the sunshine and mild climate of Palermo, which he only shared in common with the poorest Lazzarone in the place."

Such was the reasoning of the Englishmen at Palermo, and such I believe is the reasoning of most of my countrymen when far from home, and making money to enjoy themselves when they return to it.

With such men I had nothing in common. I was content to share the sunshine of Sicily with the very insects that basked in it, and liked it all the better that the poor enjoyed it too. This want of sympathy in our tastes and feelings soon made itself felt. They discovered that I was deficient in patriotism, in finding so much good elsewhere than in my native land, and I found them illiberal and purse-proud, so our intercourse, after some time, was reduced to occa-



sional formal visits, and never grew into friendship.

"When I had been about a month at Palermo, walking out one evening, to my surprise and dismay I encountered the man on earth I most wished to avoid, and whom I had hoped never again to behold. Figgins, the odious Figgins stood before me. He gazed insolently in my face, never even touching his hat as he approached me, and said, "I see you are more surprised than pleased at this meeting. It however was inevitable, and as I want to speak to you without interruption, we had better walk outside the town."

"You can have nothing to say to me," replied I, "that I can wish to hear;" my thoughts running on what course I had best pursue in the present emergency, as on my conduct *now* I felt that my future position with this ruffian must depend. Should I appeal to my banker, and the English merchants I knew, for their aid against a fellow who had formed a plot to extort money from me? These thoughts glanced much more rapidly through my mind than I can indite them, but not so rapidly as not to betray irresolution by my countenance, to him who was eagerly examining it. Even in the brief interval I remembered that my intercourse with my banker was but slight, and that my countrymen, mortified that I had not evinced a greater desire to cultivate their acquaintance, had latterly treated me with only a distant civility. I should therefore, in all probability, find them little disposed to judge favorably of me in a case which required a more than ordinary good will to insure me their assistance to defeat the mercenary scheme of Figgins, and this conviction operated to quell the lagging courage I was endeavoring to summon up to resist him.

"Since you left Nice," said this scoundrel, "I have been unfortunate at play. I had been so lucky with you, that I determined to try still further my luck; but fortune, the blind jade! has jilted me, and again I am obliged to have recourse to you. I want money, and therefore I have followed you here."

"You have no claim on me," answered I, anger and hatred operating so powerfully on me, that had a pistol been within my reach, I should not have hesitated to have shot this wretch.

"No claim on you?" repeated Figgins; "well, that's cool, however. I'll make you know, aye, and feel too, that I have a claim, and the best of all claims, that of the strong over the weak, the innocent over the guilty. The same reason that made you buy my silence in Nice still exists, and is strengthened by your having once paid for it. I will instantly go and denounce you to a magistrate, unless you comply with my demand. Aye, you may look as furious as you like. Had you bodily strength enough to do it, you would kill me on the spot, and so get rid of me, as you did of the poor girl you murdered; but I could master ten like you, and so you feel at this moment, so it's no use your trying your tricks with me."

O! the rage, the intense hate, that filled my breast as I listened to this wretch! A demon seemed to have entered my heart, banishing from

it every feeling of man, and planting in their stead a thirst of vengeance that maddened me.

"It's no use putting yourself in such a passion," said Figgins, with a malicious sneer; "what's the good of it? You'd be but as a child in my hands, if we came to try our strength, and all the anger in the world won't change me. Money I want, and money I will have; and I swear, that if you don't come down with the sum I require, I will instantly go and denounce you. I asked you too little before: I was a fool for not knowing better the value of your secret: I *now* am wiser, and therefore insist on five hundred pounds more. That sum paid, you shall not be troubled by me again."

Why, oh! why did my good angel then sleep? Why did not the insolence of this hardened villain rouse me into resistance? O! shame to manhood, to stand paltering thus with a wretch, instead of defying him! Yet, such was the dread his threat of exposure had inspired in my soul, that fascinated like the hapless bird which drops down to the serpent who menaces it, I yielded to the instinct of terror, and basely condescended to make terms with this ruffian.

"When I gave you so large a sum before," said I, "it was with the perfect understanding that never more were you to make any demand on me."

"Nor should I," interrupted he, "had I not been so unlucky at play. But what was I to do when the money you gave me was all gone at the gaming-house? It was like a dream, and when I looked at my empty purse, I felt as if you had never filled it. There was nothing left for me to do but to make you fill it again, so I determined to follow you, and here I am. You thought to deceive me by changing your route, but it was useless. I have my spies everywhere, and you can no more hide yourself from me than I can live without money, and that's one of the most difficult things I know."

"But were I to give you money, the sum you have named is absurd, and out of the question; what security should I have that you were never more to make any demand on me?" observed I, covered with shame and confusion at parleying with such a villain.

"What security?" repeated he, with a derisive smile; "why, my word of honor, to be sure. What other security can I give?"

"Your word of honor!" said I; and a portion of the contempt and abhorrence he inspired was expressed in my countenance.

"Don't provoke me, don't provoke me," replied he; "for if you do, I may demand double the sum I have named; and I am as obstinate as an Irish pig when I am made angry."

"Will you swear, on your oath, that if I give you two hundred pounds more, you will never again appear before me, nor address by letter?"

"Just as if my word of honor wasn't quite as binding as by oath!" And Figgins leered in my face, while I groaned in spirit, being fully convinced that no more reliance could be placed on one than on the other.

"I can only give you two hundred," resumed I. "Mine is not a fortune to admit of throwing away such sums."

"Do you call throwing it away, when your character, your very life, depends on my silence?" demanded he. "You cannot impose on me. I know as well as you do, that to save my life you would not give me a guinea, were you not in my power; and I am not at all disposed to throw away my advantage over you."

Stung to desperation by his insolence, I declared that I would give no more than two hundred, let the consequences be what they might; and after some attempts on his part to extort more, which I resisted, he at length consented to accept that sum; and I desired him to meet me on the same spot in an hour from that time, when I would bring him the money.

"Why not give me a cheque on your banker here?" said he.

"Because I don't choose it," replied I, angrily.

"Only take care of what you are about," observed Figgins; "for if you play any tricks, I'll go at once to the magistrate, and have you arrested."

I glanced scornfully at him, and walked towards home to get my letter of credit, and proceeded with it to the banker's for the money. I noticed that he followed me at a little distance, keeping me in view all the time until I entered my house; and when I again left it to go to the bank, he never lost sight of me. There must have been some indication of the tumult of my mind in my aspect or manner, for the banker asked me if I were unwell. This simple question embarrassed me, and I stammered out that I had only a slight head-ache.

"You must take care of yourself, Mr. Herbert," observed he. "This climate, genial and fine as it is, is apt to disagree with strangers at first; and you really look feverish and ill."

I proceeded to the spot where I had appointed to meet my persecutor, bearing the gold in a small sack, which I had great trouble in preventing my banker from insisting on sending to my house by one of his clerks.

Figgins had dogged me the whole time, and now, having walked on before me to the place of meeting, stopped, and waited for my approach.

"Lay down the money," cried he. "I don't want to come too near you. You may have a pistol as well as a sack of gold in your pocket; and I don't want to tempt you to commit another murder."

"Wretch!" exclaimed I, "he who should rid the earth of you, would render a service to the world."

"Come, come, no hard words if you please. Remember, I have never killed any one yet, and that's more than you can say," replied he.

I threw the sack to him, and turned away, maddened by the sense of my dependence on such a villain.

would pursue me wherever I might go, and that I should never escape from his power. Who could describe the deep sense of shame, the bitter humiliation and misery this thralldom must inflict on a man possessed of one gentlemanly feeling, one noble sentiment? I writhed under it, and loathed myself for having meanly, basely, yielded to the first attempt at extortion of Figgins.

What was I to do, where was I to fly, in order to elude his vigilance? Again my tortured mind became a prey to despair, and lost the energy to resist the morbid gloom into which I was sinking. When I embraced my child, that creature dearer to me a thousand times than life, her sweet and innocent smiles seemed to reproach me for having entailed dishonor and disgrace on her name.

Although her blessed mother had escaped the bitter pangs that my exposure must have inflicted, had she lived, was not my child's destiny endangered? Could I count for a day, an hour, on the silence of Figgins, who, when I least expected it, might suddenly stand before me as of late, and dictate terms again?

How could my fortune, far from large, resist the heavy inroads made in it by the extortion of this man? Yes, this fortune which should have been the provision of my daughter, would inevitably dwindle away under his demands, until beggary became my portion; and oh, how infinitely worse! that of the daughter on whom I doted. Would it not be better for me to lay down the load of life, now too heavy to be borne, and thus escape the fangs of the monster whom I dreaded? But to leave my child to rush, unbidden, into the dread presence of my offended God! Oh! no; I dared not commit the foul crime of self-murder; and yet existence was hateful, was insupportable to me. My brain throbbed in agony, my reason was bewildered, as I reflected on my terrible condition. Human aid it was vain to expect. I had permitted myself to be so closely entwined in the fold of the serpent that held me, that I saw no possibility of rescue. But this utter despair of human aid reminded me of Heavenly succor. I knelt and prayed for support to my Heavenly Father, and felt calmed and strengthened when I arose from my supplications.

For some days after my interview with the vile Figgins, I never went out without expecting to meet him. Every man of his stature that I beheld at a distance I imagined to be he, and I was disposed to turn back, so much did I dislike encountering him; but I worked my courage up to confront him, and was repaid for the effort by discovering the person, whose height was similar, not to be he. Haunted by the dread of another demand from him, my very dreams presenting his odious countenance and abominable leer, I felt that change of scene was absolutely necessary to divert my thoughts from this one painful subject which now engrossed them, banishing gentler and holier ones, as well as the one terrible event that had entailed all the misery of my life.

That event, which for years had filled my mind, had faded away before the actual danger that this wretch Figgins menaced me with. The

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

From this hour, I felt that there was no security for me from the base wretch who was the master of my destiny. I had the conviction that he

dread of him became a positive monomania. He assumed gigantic proportions, and demoniacal propensities and power, in my troubled slumbers. He grasped me in his iron arms, he held me, balancing me as if a helpless infant over steep precipices, projecting far into the sea, into which I expected every moment to be hurled. At other times my dreams presented him dragging me into a court of justice, at which presided gibbering fiends, who laughed aloud when he denounced my crime, and held out their arms to seize me, when, screaming in terror, the large drops wrung by agony falling from my brow, I awoke, to thank heaven it was but a dream.

I began to tremble for my reason. The agitated nights, the impending dread that haunted me through the day, could not, I felt, much longer continue without driving me mad. Sometimes it occurred to me to travel in the East. In that remote quarter of the globe I might elude my tormentor, and drag on the remainder of my days free from dread. But then came the thought of my child. I could not bear to part from her; and to expose her to the risks and dangers of Eastern climes was not to be thought of. In all my misery, her smiles, her artless affection, were the only drops of balm to sweeten my bitter cup of life; and, as I gazed on her beautiful face, so like her blessed mother's, I felt that, rather than it should ever wear the blush of shame occasioned by the exposure of her wretched father, I would submit to every privation, every humiliation, that man could undergo.

Now that my abode at Palermo was known to Figgins, I became so unsettled and nervous lest he should return to extort money from me, that I determined to leave it and return to Naples, where, after a short stay, I would travel homeward. Two or three days after I had formed this resolution, my banker called on me, and after some apologies for the liberty he was about to take, but which, as he asserted, a sentiment of good-will towards me prompted, he told me, with much circumlocution, that reports very prejudicial to my character had been circulated by an Englishman of low manner and habits who had lately left Palermo.

"The fact is," said he, "this person, in a state of intoxication, obtruded himself into the news-room, which is an establishment supported by subscription, for the sole use of Sicilian gentlemen, and to which, by courtesy, the English merchants resident here are admitted, but have not the privilege of introducing others. Seeing some of his countrymen enter, the individual in question forced his way into the room in spite of the representation and remonstrances of the porter; and when one or two of the English gentlemen explained to him that strangers were excluded, he pulled out a considerable sum in gold to prove his respectability, declared he could bring you to certify that he was a gentleman, and had only come to Palermo to visit you; and these asseverations not being deemed satisfactory reasons for violating the regulations of the establishment, he grew irate, insulted all the members who were present, and anger, combined with intoxication, having wholly mastered him, he swore that, little as the members seemed to think of him, he could make you, whom pro-

bably they respected, tremble at his nod. These strange expressions excited the curiosity of some of those present, who, piqued by your evident avoidance of cultivating an acquaintance with them, are not favorably disposed towards you. By affecting to doubt the insinuations of this low man, they stung him into asserting that no later than the preceding day he had compelled you to give him no less a sum than two hundred pounds, which he made you go to your banker to procure, which sum he declared he could show them; nay, more, that he could compel you to give him as much more whenever he pleased, as he held your fate in his hands. I was not present when this scene occurred, but soon after, two of your countrymen called on me, and inquired whether you had not the previous day drawn from my bank two hundred pounds in gold. I acknowledged that such had been the case, little thinking that, by so doing, I was confirming the evil suspicions these persons had formed of you. I knew not the motive of their inquiry, and only discovered it to-day, when I found that the vile insinuations of a low drunkard had been received as evidence against you, and that your countrymen have been searching everywhere for this man, in order to have him examined, and an investigation made into your connexion with him. I have come to inform you of this disagreeable affair. The man who has caused it, left by the packet early the next morning for Naples; but the persons who have made themselves so officious here have written to their correspondent at Naples to gain intelligence of this man, giving a minute description of his person and dress, by which they hope to discover him, they not having been able to ascertain his name."

My feelings during this statement can be easily imagined. Shame, rage, and terror, in turn assailed me. I made a violent effort to conceal my emotion, but it must have been an unsuccessful one, for the banker, with much good nature, said, "I see you are shocked, disgusted, and no wonder; that your countrymen should lend credence to the assertions of a man evidently of a low station in life, and by their own account intoxicated while he made them, does seem as strange as it is uncalled for. I have expressed my sentiments on the subject to them, but finding that they were determined to busy themselves in the matter, I have thought it a duty I owed to you, to make you acquainted with the business."

I thanked Signor Magatti with as much calmness as I could assume. I feared to deny having seen the wretch Figgins at Palermo, lest by so doing I should compromise myself still more. In fact, my having drawn the two hundred pounds on the day he had named, which could be only known at the bank, and to myself, unless he had been informed of it by some one in the bank, or by me, was a positive proof of at least a portion of his assertion. Then the gold he had displayed furnished another evidence against me, and I felt so inextricably involved that I knew not what to offer in my own defence. At length I ventured to say that though I did not acknowledge the right of the two gentlemen named to interfere in my concerns, it had become positively necessary for me to set out with

as little delay as possible for Naples, in order to discover and punish the impostor who had dared to make use of my name. There was no need for me to affect indignation, for my bosom swelled with it, and my anger had such an influence with Signor Magatti, that he entered warmly into my feelings, and appeared convinced that I had been slandered. "Had you not better see, or write to your two countrymen here?" said he, "you may quote me as your informant of the active part they have taken in this affair. Or I will go with you to them, for I really think the sooner their tongues are stopped on this subject, the better."

I felt that were I to decline his offer, it would make him think ill of me, and this I was unwilling should be the case, for I knew that he was on terms of intimacy with Signor Bertucci, and would in all probability inform him of my refusal to confront those who had so unjustifiably taken a part against me. And yet, with all my pride and reserve, how painful was it for me to seek these men, and to enter with them on a subject so humiliating! But it must be done. I must drain the cup of mortification to its very dregs, or leave Signor Magatti to believe me culpable; so I assented to his proposal, and set out with him to seek my countrymen. I found them at home, and not being together, they were less untractable than might otherwise possibly have been the case. I stated the cause of my visit, which each in turn seemed to anticipate the moment I entered his abode; for never did I behold two men more confounded than when I demanded by what right they had, on the faith only of some low and drunken ruffian, presumed to attribute crime or guilt to me, or to take on themselves to institute inquiries on the subject.

My indignation and anger, which were unfeigned, seemed to convey to them a conviction that I had nothing to fear; and in proportion to my spirit, became their want of it. They evidently had not expected that I would have thus boldly confronted them; and when I threatened legal proceedings, they expressed the utmost regret at having been misled by the assertions of the drunken man they had seen, and offered any, or every apology I might choose to dictate.

If Signor Magatti was delighted at my triumph, repeatedly reminded my two spiteful and malicious countrymen that he had never for a moment given the slightest confidence to the vile insinuations of the unknown person, and had urged them to observe the same course. The crest-fallen gentlemen looked very contrite, and declared they would immediately write to their correspondents, to take no further steps in the affair, as the whole had originated in error.

Encouraged by their shame and confusion, I felt my spirit increase; and, with a haughty air, I assured them that I would immediately proceed to Naples, and use my utmost endeavors to have the man in question arrested, and compel him to explain the hints he had dared to give; and I added, that I trusted, if he was arrested, that they would be ready to come forward and prove the words he had used. This they promised to do; and I left them, coldly accepting their reiterated excuses and regrets.

"Give me your hand, Signor Herbert," said

Signor Magatti, "you have behaved like a man, and a brave man too, jealous of his honor and reputation. It did my heart good to hear you rate those gentlemen, and to observe your *fiercé* while you did so. They were made heartily ashamed of themselves, and they deserved it; for between you and me, they are extremely malicious. Never does a noble traveller from your country visit Sicily, that these two do not instantly make us acquainted with some history or anecdote to his disadvantage. One is ruined by his extravagance, and is obliged to get out of the way of his creditors. Another has lost his fortune by gambling, and another is so immoral that he is glad to leave his own country, where he is too well known. In short, there is no end to the propensity to scandal of the individuals we have left; and if they are to be credited, there is not to be found in all your country an honorable man, or a spotless woman. Such persons greatly injure their own land by propagating such reports, and I rejoice that they have been reproved by you. And yet how prone are we all to error! How given to think ill of our fellow-men! I assure you that I, even I, who am not disposed to misjudge, fancied that you were not over-willing to confront these gentlemen. Yes, I misjudged you, my dear Signor Herbert, until I saw the anger that flashed in your eye, the honest indignation, and noble *fiercé* you evinced when reprimanding these men."

I was glad that I had been able to scrow my courage up to the scene I had gone through, when I saw the good effect it had produced; and I took leave of Signor Magatti, leaving him impressed with a most favorable opinion of me, although the striking fact of my having drawn the two hundred pounds in gold from his house, the day in which the wretch Figgins had boasted of my having given him that sum, offered such an incontrovertible evidence against me that one would have thought it could not have been passed over. But such is the influence of money. To give so large a sum away, argued that I must be richer than was imagined, and to be rich is always in favor of a man, more especially when he who attacks his reputation is known to be poor.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Now fully impressed with the conviction that not even his own interest could bind the odious Figgins to secrecy, and that with his habit of inebriety, he would, during those hours when he was no longer master of his reason, disclose as at Palermo, his power over me, I became more than ever wretched, when I reflected on my own position. How was I to escape from the reach of this harpy,—where hide myself? In what a labyrinth of misery had I involved myself, and where was I to find a clue to lead me out of it? Then came a hope that Figgins' habits of intoxication might abridge the term of his life, and he dead, I might pass the remainder of my life free from alarm! But then came the recollection

tion of how many aged men I had seen who had all their days indulged in a similar habit to Figgins. He was probably inured to intoxication, and might live to torture me during all my days.

Oh! the misery, the despair of knowing my peace, my honor, to be in the hands of one of the most despicable miscreants on earth, without the power of securing his silence, or of ridding myself of his exactions!

Existence, held on such terms, instead of blessing, was a burden, an intolerable burden, and had not the Almighty forbidden self-murder, I would have laid down the load. Of one change in myself, I had cause to be thankful, and I was so, deeply, humbly thankful; for I now felt that, to free myself for ever from the power of the vile Figgins, I would not, could the mere movement of a finger effect it, occasion his death. No, as yet I was unsullied by guilt, and though, by my own folly and madness I had increased the penalty, I would not for worlds add to my present wretchedness, the consciousness of crime, the weight of remorse. I remembered when at Nice, the desperate thought of destroying Figgins had crossed my mind, and I thanked God, that now, whatever my sufferings might be, such a thought returned to me no more.

I sailed from Palermo the next evening, my plans for the future totally unsettled, and haunted by the dread, that as my persecutor had traced me thence, notwithstanding the *ruse* I had put in practice to deceive him when I quitted Nice, so could he be able to discover my retreat, wherever I might direct my steps. Oh! could I but lay open my position to the Signor Bertucci—he, such a sensible, as well as such a kind man, and who had evinced such a warm interest for me and my child. But how convince him that I was really guiltless, when I had nothing but my own assertions to offer in proof. The whole affair must appear so strange, so improbable, as to be almost incomprehensible. No; I could not bring myself to relate what must excite his incredulity; I could not encounter his altered countenance, when I had revealed my secret. I must submit to the fate that awaited me, a fate brought on by my own folly, but not the less bitter for that.

Arrived at Naples, I called on my only friend there, the Signor Bertucci. He was surprised, but pleased to see me again; had many new subjects of interest to talk to me about in the recently discovered buildings and antique bronzes of Pompeii. The glass found there also, refuting some learned hypothesis, relative to the ancients not having applied glass in their windows, lately published by an erudite *abbate*, afforded him an opportunity of revealing some of the vast antiquarian lore, in which he was so well versed; and, as I listened to his reflections, I almost envied the calmness of mind that permitted such researches, and enabled him to be so eloquent on them. I told him of my desire to visit Pæstum, and to explore the beautiful country between Naples and Salerno. He expressed his regret that he could not accompany me, and advised my leaving my child and her nurse under his protection, during my absence, alleging that the accommodation to be found on the road was not *suited* to a little creature, brought up so luxuri-

ously. I did not wish to impose so much trouble on him, and knowing that the kind hostess of the Victoria would herself attend to the comfort of my daughter, I determined to leave her at the hotel for the few days I should be absent, the Signor Bertucci promising to call and see her every day.

I longed to be alone: to ramble at will through a picturesque and beautiful country I had never previously explored. I fancied it might prove a diversion from the painful thoughts that haunted me, forgetting that sorrow and memory accompany the wretched wherever they go. I took leave of my daughter,—merely telling her nurse and my male attendant that I should be absent a week, but not stating whither I was going,—and two days after my return to Naples, proceeded to Castelmare, *en route* for Salerno.

Never had a fairer day been granted in Italian climes. The sky, blue and bright, was reflected on the sea, with a tint as rich as ever the purest sapphire gave forth; and, as the sun-beams fell on the sparkling water, millions of brilliants seemed to glitter on its translucent breast. The dark azure of the mountains brought near by the light and transparent atmosphere, bounded the horizon on my left, while the rippling waves broke in circling eddies on the shore at my right, with a soft and monotonous sound, most soothing to the senses. Myriads of pearls, formed by the foam of the broken wavelets, floated and glittered on the sand, like broken hopes, dispersing almost as soon as formed, and wafted away with the revolving tide.

Could I behold, unmoved, the enchanting views that presented themselves before me? There lay Capri, like a precious gem set in the sea; the sunshine playing on it, and bringing out its varied hues; and to my left, stood Vesuvius, in grim repose, yet with something menacing, too, in its aspect,—something, reminding one, that it might again overwhelm the smiling scene around, and spread desolation, where industry had almost effaced the traces of its former ravages.

Vesuvius was to the glowing picture, what the sight of a cemetery is in a beautiful landscape. It reminded one of the instability of what we are enjoying, and I turned from it as chastened, as a man in high spirits rushing from a scene of brilliant pleasure feels, on encountering a funeral procession of some young and fair victim to ruthless Death. Having left Castelmare with its dark green foliage, its olive woods, and vineyards, crowned by cliffs and isolated towers, I proceeded to La Cava, through a country full of the most picturesque and romantic scenery. Here a rustic bridge spanned a broad and sparkling stream, that jumped and gambolled over broken rocks and shining gravel, while perched on high stood wild rocks intermingled with grotesque-shaped trees, presenting just such scenes as the pencil of Salvator Rosa loved to paint. We recognise his pictures at every turn of the road, and are reminded of his having often wandered through the spots we are now exploring.

The white towers erected for pigeons along the left of the road, with the blue sky for background, and the flocks of these birds winging

their course from tower to tower, gave great animation to the scene, and the picturesque costumes of the peasants encountered, added to the beauty. All that I had heard of the country between Castelamare and Salerno fell short of the truth. It was beautiful beyond the powers of description; and as I paused to admire it, the thought of her who was sleeping in her distant grave,—of her, whose heart would have been filled with delight when gazing on such scenery, brought tears to my eyes.—Everything that touched my heart, whether in Nature or Art, awakened my regret for my lost Louisa. It was as if every noble and tender sentiment were so closely associated with her memory in my heart, that never more could they be separated. Even when I prayed to the Deity, her pure spirit floated in my thoughts as an angel interceding for me at the Throne of Mercy, as a pitying soul redeemed from sin, looking down from its own beatitude on the unhappy being she had loved so well. She was with me in thought, through the whole of this journey. Alone, with no curious or indifferent eye to mark my emotion, I abandoned my whole soul to the tender melancholy that stole over me, as I thought of her. Again her low sweet voice seemed to sound in my ear; her pensive, dark, and loving eyes met my glance, though I was passing through scenes where she had never been, and where consequently it might be supposed they could awaken no memories of her. But all that was beautiful, all that appealed to my heart, evoked the recollections of her whose image was buried in it, and though I travelled in search of recreation from care, my love and sorrow accompanied me.

I stopped a day at Salerno, so rich in associations of the middle ages, but I took little interest in its sights, and the mouldering folios shown me. The blue sky, and bluer sea, the distant sunlit mountains fading into the most delicate hues, and the luxuriant vine branches trailed from tree to tree, had more attraction for me than the objects to which strangers are led by the self-elected ciceroni of the town. I, however, suffered myself to be conducted to the church of Santa Maggiore, once the temple of Vesta, and saw the antique Sarcophagi now converted into a Mausoleum for the modern dead; but I little heeded the erudite histories of the place and its treasures, recounted to me in a doubly nasal tone by the cicerone, and gladly returned to the sea-shore, where, having engaged a boat, I was rowed some distance on the bay, whence Salerno with its tower-crowned cliffs had a striking effect. I returned to the Albergo for a late dinner, and again wandered forth to the shore. It was the Ave Maria time, and as the sound of the hymn was borne to me by the evening breeze, a deep religious feeling filled my soul. I felt, that in a strange land, far from all I knew, amidst a people who were not even acquainted with my name or country, the same Almighty God worshipped in my own land was here adored, and no place could be strange to me, where at the same hour, earnest hearts offered up the incense of prayer to Him. Oh! blessed tie of brotherhood, why should a difference in the forms of worship ever separate human hearts? The hymn borne to me on the breeze, was addressed

to the mother of God, but that did not prevent my soul from ascending in prayer to *Him*, nor did I condemn those who offer their vows to that most pure and blessed of women, who was chosen to be his mother, though theirs was not my faith. To me, worship to the divinity, when sincere, in every form is sacred, and I pity the hard of heart, who can condemn the followers of any religion which they believe to be true, and hug themselves in the selfish belief that those only of one creed can be saved. Who dares put a limit to the pity and mercy of God, towards his erring and ignorant creatures?

I left Salerno for Pæstum early next morning, refusing to take an escort, as was advised by the innkeeper. I was told of persons robbed, and in one instance murdered, through want of this precaution. But what had I to dread? The loss of the small sum I carried with me, could only occasion a temporary inconvenience, and my carriage and dress indicated so little of patrician wealth that much could not be expected in the way of ransom for me. I would offer no resistance, if assailed, and consequently dreaded no ill usage. The landlord shook his head, and said the English were always self-willed, and hoped I might not suffer for it as a poor young couple from my country had done, who, while yet in all the elysium of the honey-moon, had met their deaths returning from Pæstum, by the hands of some brigands who attacked them. The driver, he added, could tell me all about it, for he drove the hapless pair on that very day, and had been severely beaten. I questioned the man as we journeyed along, and he related the story to me.

"A fairer couple, Signor, I never saw. They were young, rich, I believe,—generous I found them, the husband handsome and manly, the wife, so youthful, as to be almost still a child. She was fair, as the finest pictures of the Madonna. Her cheeks like two roses, her eyes blue as the sky, her hair rich as our vine branches, and borne by every breeze like their tendrils. They were like two happy children escaped from school, and joyous in their liberty. They used to turn from looking at the heavens, and the blue sea, and gaze into each other's eyes, as if everything they saw together made them dearer to each other. And she would lean her small hand on his shoulder, and he would encircle her delicate waist with his arm. And sometimes they used to sing too, Signor, such beautiful duets. One might easily know how well they loved, by the way their voices kept time together. It seemed as if the notes of both came from the same breast; I warrant me, this road never before nor since heard such voices. They reminded me of birds, now rising high into the air, and then sinking down, as if they brought back a little portion of the blue heavens with them, so beautiful did they die away. Every one noticed their love. The men and women at the Albergo, who waited on them at their repasts, spoke of it. They said they were always gazing at each other, and when they passed before the mirror, they never looked in it, but turned to look at each other. 'Now,' said Annunziata—and Annunziata, Signor, is a clever girl, 'when a woman prefers looking at her lover's face, to seeing her

own in a mirror, it is a sign of the greatest affection. They are too happy,' said Annunciata, 'such happiness never lasts long.' Poor young creatures, how will they bear to live, if either should cease to love! Providence looks jealously on such bliss on earth, for when it is so great, what greater can be reserved up there, Signor?" and he pointed to the sky.

"Well, Signor, I took them to Pæstum, and they were pleased. Everything, in truth, pleased them—they were so happy. And they made sketches of temples, and each said the drawing of the other was most like, and they showed them to me; and though I could not really see which was the most perfect, both were so very true, the Signora pressed me so much to decide, that, seeing what would most please her, I said the Signor's drawing was the most like. And she clapped her small hands for joy, and gave me a piastre, while he said I was quite wrong, for hers was a much finer drawing. They say, Signor, that we don't like to see happiness in other persons' eyes; that we like to see it only in our own. But I assure you, I had grown so fond of this young pair, that it gave me pleasure to witness their great happiness. And yet, I never saw them kiss. Annunciata wouldn't believe me when I told her so. And once, when the Marito was raising her hand to his lips, before me, her cheeks grew redder than any rose, and she drew away her hand, and he seemed to understand that it was not pleasing to her, in my presence; and then she thanked him with such a look as I never saw before—never shall see again. No, Signor, with all their love, they were as modest and innocent as two *bambini* at play. One felt that they were pure in heart.

"What a bright day it still was when we turned our backs on Pæstum! Often did they stand up, to look back on the temples, until we had got too far away to see them. I was advancing at a quick pace, when all of a sudden I heard a shrill whistle, and saw heads pop up from behind a hedge, and guns aimed at the carriage, while loud voices called on me to stop. I determined to put the horses into a gallop, and began whipping them, but the Signora cried out to me to stop, and in accents that went to my very soul, implored her husband to make no resistance. He had arms in the carriage, and was well disposed to use them, but there was such agony in her entreaties that he yielded to them. The brigands came up and demanded money.

"Give them, oh, give them!" said the Signora.

"The gentleman looked angry, and I am sure was thinking how easily—for he was a strong as well as a brave man—he could drive them away, when, they more angrily demanding the money, he stooped down to take the sack that contained it from the bottom of the carriage, when one of the brigands, thinking he was looking for his pistols to shoot them, aimed his gun at him. The Signora saw him take aim, and quick as lightning threw herself between her husband and the brigand to save the former, when—oh, unhappy day!—the gun was fired, and the same shot pierced both bodies! Never, never, shall I forget that moment. Both fell back mortally wounded, and I, Signor, madden-

ed at the sight, reproached the assassin with such bitter violence, that he was only prevented murdering me also by the other brigands, who disarmed him, but not until he had terribly beaten me with the butt end of his gun. The brigands, having rifled the carriage, fled, and I, mounted on one of the horses, galloped off for aid to the next house. To this the poor Signor was borne, while the Signora was taken back to the wretched hostelry at Pæstum, there being no more room at the house to which the husband had been removed. They were insensible when they were separated, but I, Signor, my heart bled at the notion that even in death they should be parted. He died in a few minutes; she lived two days, believing all the time that he was recovering, and would soon be brought to her, and that she herself was in no danger. She spoke of her husband continually, raved of him in all her delirium, and died, Signor, talking of the unutterable happiness she experienced at being again reunited to him.

"Yes, Signor, Annunciata was right. They were too happy to live, but it was a pity that they who could not bear to be asunder a moment, should not have died together, though perhaps it was all through the mercy of God; for as the Signora lived two days after her husband, it would have been too cruel for her to know he was gone from earth before her."

This simple narrative powerfully affected me, and the changes of countenance and voice, as well as the tears of the narrator, proved his sorrow. "Yes, better," thought I, "was it that they died, while yet their happiness had known no cloud, their garland of life had not faded, nor lost a single flower. Theirs, if short, was a blissful existence, loving and beloved. What could life yield that they had not already enjoyed? Their cup of happiness was full to the very brim, and none of the dregs had yet touched their lips. But then came the thought, that had they lived to bless, and be blessed by a child, to feel that most pure and unselfish of all love, that of a parent to his offspring, which looks beyond the grave to the happiness of its object, might not their felicity in life have known increase? My heart swelled with tenderness, for my own child seemed to rise up before me; and as I thought how bitter the pang would be of leaving her alone on earth, while yet in the helplessness of childhood, I admitted that it was a mercy accorded to the youthful pair, whose fate had excited such sympathy in my breast, that they were spared this pang. I dwell on the youthful wife in all her charms, which must have been great to have made so profound an impression on the simple man, who so fondly remembered the happy pair. I felt sure she must have resembled my lost Louisa. But, far happier in a husband, she had experienced no trials like those to which one terrible event in my life had subjected my dear lost one. She had not met with moodiness and abstraction, where she had garnered up her heart; her days had been all sunlit, and when the night, the night of existence came, she slept in the same grave with her husband.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

THERE was something in the desolation of Pæstum, analogous to the state of my feelings. There stood the work of man in ruins, while the mountains, the sea, and the hills, the work of God, remained unchanged. A cloudless sky, and a dazzling sunshine, seemed to mock the time-touched temples, once the boast of other centuries, and still magnificent in their decay. There was not a fissure in them that was not distinctly revealed by the bright light shed on each and all.

The stateliness, the fine proportions of these works of antiquity, standing boldly out against a sky as darkly blue as the purest ultramarine, had a most imposing effect. They sobered, they awed my feelings. How puerile seemed the wreck of man's fleeting, transitory happiness, while contemplating these grand wrecks of ages!—these monuments of a by-gone race, whose works have so long outlived even the names of the architects and founders, as to give rise to various apocryphal hypotheses concerning their history! A miserable building, used as a wine-shop for the postillions who drive travellers to Pæstum, and as a stable for their horses, stands at a little distance from the temple, and two or three reed huts, erected as a shelter for shepherds, form a striking contrast to the temple of Neptune.

A swarthy shepherd clothed in sheep-skin, his bronzed bare legs and sandalled feet reminding one of a statue, or a squalid looking mendicant, attracted from his wretched hovel by the sight of a carriage, might be seen hovering around to entreat charity. I walked from the temple of Neptune to that of Ceres, through long grass, interspersed with wild plants and bushes, growing in rank luxuriance; but not one of the roses, for which Pæstum was once so famed, met my view.

I sat down on a broken column to contemplate the scene. Its desolation, instead of irritating my morbid feelings, soothed them. Life seems a dream, a feverish dream, soon passed, and its griefs, fleeting like our days, scarcely worth a thought, when the brevity of our existence is brought before us by the sight of objects like the temples I was gazing on, and which countless generations have, like me, looked on, and passed away like shadows, leaving no trace behind.

I arose, and proceeded to the fragments of the walls and gates of the once proud city. No solemn procession, no joyous crowd, no busy population now passed through them. No hum of voices, no sound of chariot wheels were heard; the wind slept, for not a breath of air moved the branches of the cactuses or aloes growing amid the fragments of sculpture strewn around. I felt that could I have obtained cleanly accommodation, however plain and simple, I should have liked to prolong my stay at Pæstum; but the hostelry was too filthy to be thought of, and after having waited until the setting sun cast a roseate hue on the temples, and made the hills to wear a rich lilac tint, I was warned by my postillion that it was time to depart.

"The Signor," said he, "is not like some

Ingesi who came here early this morning, and who, having walked through the temples, betook themselves to the *cabaret*, where they have ever since been carousing over the provisions and wine they brought with them from Salerno, and smoking and singing. They say the temples are not worth looking at. Yes, Signor, I heard them myself, for I understand English, having served an English merchant some time at Naples.—Giovani, who keeps the inn, says they have done nothing but abuse the place, and drink until they scarcely retain the power of moving."

I heard the voices of this "rabble rout" as I entered the carriage, singing obscene songs, interrupted by hiccups and oaths, and rejoiced not to have met the individuals themselves, whose presence would have greatly impaired the pleasure, melancholy though it was, which the contemplation of Pæstum had afforded me. Leonardi, for so my postillion was called, beguiled the tediousness of the journey from Pæstum to Salerno by singing. He sang of the shepherd who leaves his humble home, and fond wife and children, to guide his flock to some distant pasture, where for months he is to be separated from those dear to him, and dwell in his comfortless and solitary exile, with no companions but his sheep and dog. His sole consolation is that the sun which shines over his head, brightens also the home of his beloved ones; and the stars, the bright eyes of night, which look down on him while he prays ere he sinks in slumber, meet the glance also of his poor wife; thus by the blessed sun of day, and blessed stars by night, he feels not wholly separated from his dear ones, and it will be sweet when he rejoins them, to tell his wife, as they together gaze on the golden sun, and silvery stars, how often they spoke to him of her.

Then he sang of the lover stealing at night to the lattice of his beloved, and awaking her from her slumbers by his song. He tells her that while she sleeps he is near, and hopes that in her dreams she may show less severity to him than when she is awake. He blames the harshness of her parents, who will not let their daughter wed one who is poor in all but love, and paints that love is better than gold to make a wife happy.

The voice of Leonardi was not unmusical, and he sang with considerable feeling, while I leaned back in the carriage in a dreamy reverie, glad to be withdrawn from my own sad thoughts by those vague and more pleasing ones suggested by his simple songs. Gratified at the commendations I occasionally bestowed on his voice, he ceased not to sing until we arrived at Salerno, and I believe the silver I gave him was less gratifying to the kind-hearted fellow than my approbation of his songs.

The fumes of sundry savory preparations issued from the kitchen of the Albergo as I entered.

"It is the supper of some Milordi Ingesi, who are expected," said the host in an apologetic tone, on seeing that I turned from the strong odor of oil, onions, and cheese, with distaste. "They are brave milordis, pay like princes, and drink, *corpo di Bacco*!—like Bacchus himself."



They took all the provisions in my house with them this morning to Pæstum, and as much wine as would have served eight Italians, though they were but three Inglesi; and they ordered the best supper and wine Salerno can produce, to be ready for their return."

Fatigued by my journey, and desirous to seek my pillow, I despatched my repast, the frugality of which, and the diluted wine with which I washed it down, must have given my host but a mean opinion of me. I certainly could not pass for a Milordi Inglese with him, as profusion and gross habits are what Italian innkeepers, in remote districts, consider the peculiar characteristics of the class they so designate. I sought my bed-room, and found, to my annoyance, that it communicated by a door with a rude sort of *salle à manger*, in which a table was ready laid for supper for three persons. I instantly conjectured that it was intended for the riotous trio whom I left deep in their Bacchanalian orgies at Pæstum; and, anxious to avoid such a vicinity, I descended to the landlord, and endeavored to make him give me the chamber I had occupied the previous night, or any other, more remote from that to be occupied by the expected guests. But I urged in vain. Every other room was filled, my late chamber was now in the possession of two ladies, and he had no other.

I had not long enjoyed the slumber induced by fatigue, when I was awaked by loud voices, and reiterated demands for supper.

"More wine, bring more wine," cried a voice that seemed familiar to my ear.

"Are you afraid of not being paid?" vociferated the same person; and I heard the chink of a well-filled purse, shook, I concluded, to display the owner's wealth.

"Aye, aye," said another speaker, "he need not be afraid of your not paying. You're the prince of paymasters; as well as of good fellows, and the very one to give these d—m—d Italians a right notion of the English."

"Why, yes, I flatter myself I'm rather a good specimen of my country. I like an idle life, and love to live on the fat of the land wherever I may be."

"Aye, my hearty, and you are right too. A short life and a merry one, say I. But after all, this here country is but a poor affair for a man with plenty of the ready rhino, to throw away his time in. The Italians are a set of spooneys. Know nothink of sport, and what's a country without sport, I should like to know?"

"You are right, Motcombe. No man of spirit can henjoy life where there is no sport, and for my part, if I could find myself back in hold Hengland again, I'd never wish to stir hout of it."

"I say, Bradstock, why did you leave that there Lord Ardingfield? They say he's as rich as a Jew."

"Aye, and as fond of his money too. Why, to tell you the truth, it wasn't much of a place after all. He *would* pay his own bills; and when a man does that, what can his valet make by him? Then he made a fuss when any of his things disappeared, and things *will* disappear when noblemen are travelling, going from himn to himn; you take, don't you?"

"Yes; and so did you, too, I suspect, Master Bradstock; hah, hah, hah." And this attempt at repartee occasioned a general hilarity.

"Not much, I can assure you, for I saw very soon *he* was not precisely a sort of chap as would stand my *taking* ways."

"But it wasn't wise to throw up the place, and so far from home, too; you have heard the wise old saw, 'never throw out dirty water till you have got clean,' and devilish good advice too."

"But if a place throws *you* up, or that you see it's coming close to that point, who wouldn't take the initiative, and give warning instead of waiting to get it?"

"Then there is the advantage of being able to say when one hoffers for another place, 'I left hat my own haccord; I was not *sent* away.' Eh, Bradstock?"

"Certainly, Motcombe. It makes hall the difference."

"What infernal binns these here Hitalian onés are! Here have I been ringing this here bell for the last twenty minutes, for supper, without being hable to get hany one to hanswer. Yes, Hengland is the only place to live in. But here comes supper at last. I hordered that no maccaroni should be sent hup. I can't abide the sight of it. Maccaroni looks to me for all the world like boiled tobacco pipes. Would you believe it, when I told 'em to give us a good hot devil, they stood as if I really wanted the hold gentleman himself, and the cook began crossing himself. Come, gentlemen, let us set to. I see we have devilled cutlets, devilled chickens, and devilled beef-steaks; after which the *Mar-sala* may pass hoff as sherry."

The repast was done ample justice to, as far as I could judge by the clatter of the knives and forks, and the comparative silence, interrupted only by half distinct exclamations, from mouths too much filled to articulate plainly, and invitations to drink wine.

"What a regular humbug that there Pæstum is," said Mr. Figgins, for by this time I ascertained that the voice familiar to my ear was no other than his; and though I trembled at his proximity, I listened attentively to the ribald jests going on between him and his companions, in the hope of hearing his plans for the future, when wine should have rendered him unguarded and communicative.

"Yes," resumed he, "it may well be called Pæstum, for it's a regular pest, and nuisance too."

"Bravo, bravo," reiterated his guests. "A capital hit."

"To come hall the way from Naples to see two hold tumble-down temples, that's not worth turning one's head to look at."

"You're quite right, Figgins; but——"

"Now, didn't I tell you, Bradstock, never to call me Figgins again? It's a d-m-n-d low name, and I can't habide it."

"Pardónnez-moi, as the French say," replied Mr. Bradstock, "but it was an hoblee."

"A what?"

"An hoblee, as the French call it. I was going to say that it's the nobility and gentry that's to blame for sending so many people to see sich places as Pæstum. They purtends, for

it can be nothink in the world but putrence, that they find 'em charming, or, as they say, very hinteresting. I'm sure I've heard that there silly chap, Lord Hardingfield, rave habout 'em to his friends, has if they were the finest buildings in the world. And what are they to the Temple in London, I should like to know, where you may see the steamers running hup and down the Thames, hevery ten minutes, while you are walking in a garden filled with flowers? And to think of the lies of people! Hang me if I haven't heard that chap, Hardingfield, talk scores of times of the roses of Pæstum, and I'll be sworn there isn't a rose in the whole place, for I looked all around to find one."

"Talk of *our* lying," observed Mr. Motcombe; "why, hang me, if the hupper class, as they call themselves, don't lie ten times more. Lord love ye! I've heard some on 'em tell such thumpers, when I've been a-waiting at table, as made me wonder how they had the face to do it. Why, would you believe it, I've heard one of 'em say that the hearth, yes, the hearth we live on, moved around the sun!"

"No, d——n me, that's too much, Motcombe, you made that yourself. There's no man in the world would have the himpudence to tell even a hidiot that the firm earth, with all the thousands and thousands of mountains, rocks, castles, palaces, and cities on it, could move up into the clouds to march round the sun! What would become of the buildings, aye, and of the people too? Why, they'd be capesized, and dashed to pieces, and who would there be left to tell the story?"

"Don't himagine I was such a flat as to believe such a himprobable lie," answered Mr. Motcombe; "I honly mentioned it to show how lords- and gentlemen can lie when they set about it."

"Lord, that's nothing," said Mr. Bradstock. "I've heard many things quite as himprobable. What do you think of my hearing one on them there chaps of lords talk of there being mountains in the moon, and the marks of a volcanor, I think he called it, visible through a tell-hiscope."

"And I," observed Figgins, "once heard one on 'em say that the moon shines with a borrowed light."

"Come, come, that's a good un," remarked Mr. Motcombe. "I'd like to know who's the lender?"

"The chap said it was the sun, and they were all such d-m-n flats, that not one of 'em seemed to doubt it. In fact, they all of 'em took these lies, as if they were hestablished truths that no one questioned."

"And to think such spooneys, such snobs, should be masters of thousands, owners of fine castles and palaces, while we, who have ten times more sense, should be hoblged to wait on 'em. 'Tis too bad, ain't it?"

"But all the world knows their folly; for don't every one of whom they buy take 'em in, in a manner that none but fools would submit to? and when we hadd per cent. to what we buy for them, have they the sense to discover it, tho' the greatest fool among our class would see it in a jiffy?"

Here, overcome by weariness, I dropped asleep, and so lost much of their discourse.

## CHAPTER XL.

I SUPPOSE I could not have slept long, when I was awaked by a loud chorus, singing, or rather screaming, a bacchanalian song. For a few minutes I could not remember where I was, or what all this clamor could mean; but when recollection came, I shrank with disgust at the odious vicinity of the noisy revellers, and from the fumes of tobacco which impregnated my room. The song over, I heard one of these ruffians ask Figgins what he intended to do with his money.

"Why not set up a cock-pit at Naples, and bring over fighting-cocks from England?" said the speaker.

"A devilish good speculation," observed Motcombe. "It would be sure to be well supported by the Henglish who come to Naples, and there's always a plenty on 'em, and it would give these spooney Hitalians a notion of sport."

"And suppose you brought out some good bull-dogs, and made 'em fight once or twice a week? You could get good subscriptions for entrance to see the sport, and turn a handsome sum by betting."

"It's a low trade, and I hates what's low. I'd much rather live like a gentleman. Do nothing, but go about from place to place amusing myself," replied Figgins.

"That's very well, but have you money enough to keep up always an idle life? for be assured, my good fellow, after one has been living like a gentleman for some time, it seems harder than ever to be obliged to go to work again. I know it by hexperience."

"But I have got a bank that will never fail," answered Figgins. "When my money is gone I know where to get more."

"You're a lucky fellow, my boy, that's all; and I wish you'd put me in the way of making gold also."

"And me," observed Motcombe. "God knows, I want money badly enough. Just give us a hint how you have managed to have your purse always well filled, though you open its strings so freely, live like a fighting cock, and treat your friends like a prince."

"Why, because I've my wits about me. If I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth, and I know full well I wasn't, I've made myself one. Poverty, it is said, sharpens the wits, and I believe it. Mine ought to be sharp enough, for no one knows better what it is to want a dinner. I was always thinking how I could gain enough to become independent of service, and at last I hit on the means."

"There's a good fellow, let us into the secret."

"No, no! Every man for himself. My wits have worked me a mine. Set yours to work also, my fine fellows, and see what you'll make of 'em. I asked no one's advice how to make

my fortune, and I'll tell no one where my mine lies."

I trembled like a guilty wretch while his companions were questioning Figgins. I dreaded every moment that he would, now that he was under the influence of the wine he had drunk, disclose my secret, or at least furnish a clue to it; and the weight of a mountain seemed removed from my breast when I found he was not disposed to satisfy their curiosity.

"Come, let us have some brandy," said Bradstock.

"This here wine is poor washy stuff," observed Motcombe, "for all the Italians praise it. It is made in Sicily, is it not?"

"Talking of Sicily," interrupted Bradstock, "you were there lately for a short time, Figgins, were you not?"

"And what if I were?" replied Figgins, angrily. "What is that to you? Ain't I at liberty to go where I like? And once for all, I tell you, Bradstock, I don't like being called Figgins, and I *won't* be called so. I told you that I will answer to no name but Howard. That's an aristocratic one, and sounds well. It belongs to one of the noblest families in Hengland, and has such a genteel air with it!"

"Well, my good fellow, I meant no offence, but when a man has known another so many years by one name, he is apt to call him by it."

"As for offence," observed Figgins, "I halloo no man to offend me, for if he does I turn my back on him, and stand no more treats."

"Well, my dear Howard, 'pon my honor it was only a slip of the tongue. Why, do you think I'd say anything to vex you, after being friends for the last ten years? I remember well we struck up our friendship when you were in that scrape about the jewels that were stolen, and which I helped you to dispose of."

"And about which the poor waiting-maid was transported," observed Motcombe.

"If you think I'm to be frightened by your ripping up old by-gones, you're mistaken, gentlemen, I can tell you," said Figgins, his voice indicating suppressed rage. "Many a guinea I've given you both, when I could ill afford it, to induce you to hold your tongues about that awkward business. But that was when I was a servant and depended on my character for bread. Now, the case is different. I know where to get money whenever I want it, and all you could both say and swear, can't stop the bank I draw on."

"Don't be too sure of that, Mr. Howard."

"No, don't reckon too much on that," said Bradstock.

"What, do ye mean to threaten me, after all I have done for ye?" demanded Figgins, in a rage.

"Done for us," repeated Bradstock; "what have you done that you should reproach us in this vulgar way? Lent us a few pounds occasionally, and invited us to dinner, or to make an excursion, because you wanted our society, being tired of your own."

"I advise you, now that you intend to set up for a gentleman, to learn to behave as such," observed Motcombe. "Who ever heard a gentleman reproach another with having lent him a

few pounds, or with having given him a few dinners?"

"Hold your tongues, and don't tell me how gentlemen behave; I know all that much better than you do. But when two fellows, filled with good food and wine, which hasn't cost 'em a silver, begin to open old sores that ought never to be touched again, they must expect that a man will speak his mind. I don't want to quarrel with you, if you don't provoke me into it. So, let us have some brandy, shake hands, and forgive and forget."

"Yes, yes, forgive and forget," echoed both the men. "It's foolish for old friends to quarrel."

"I'll go down stairs, and see if I can't make the master of this house fork out some Rosolio," said Figgins. "It's rare stuff, made in Sicily, where I drank plenty of it." And I heard him staggering out of the room.

"He's a regular cocktail," observed Bradstock, "and deserves a sound thrashing."

"And should get it too," said Motcombe; "only that were we to give it him, it would stop the supplies in future; and one never knows when one may want them. My motto is, that 'It's better to use than abuse a friend.'"

"D-mn such false friends, say I," replied Bradstock. "But we must find out how he comes by all this money of late. We may be able to turn it to account."

"I suspect he went to Palermo for money," observed Motcombe; "for I know he lost a round sum playing at blind hooky with some chaps at Naples, and was short of cash the day before he went away. He stopped only a very short time, and returned with his pockets full of money."

"There's some mystery in all this, and I hoped we'd have got it out of him when he was tipsy; but he's such a fox, even when in liquor, that he's too deep for us."

"I say, do you know how much he has about him?"

"Not exactly, but I should think a handsome sum."

"Suppose we were to rob him when he's asleep. In an inn like this the robbery could be put on some one else; and he's too much in our power to prosecute us, even if he knew us to be the thieves."

"A good thought; and we'll share the money."

"Certainly. You sleep in the same room with him. When you hear him snoring, take his purse, and hand it to me. I'll be waiting outside the door for it. You had better hand me his watch, and yours too, for it must appear as if you also were robbed."

"But we may be searched, and where will you hide the money and watches?"

"I'll take care of that, so don't be uneasy. I hear him coming up; is it agreed on?"

"Yes; here's my hand on it, and mind you are outside the door to receive the stolen goods."

"I'll be there—mum!—not a word more—for here he is."

"I told you I'd get you some Rosolio," hiccuped Figgins, "and here it is. I've tasted it, and I can tell you, it's the genuine article, neat

as imported, as they say in our country. This here spooney made great difficulties in letting me have it. Fancy what a flat he must be to refuse giving liquor to a man who can pay for it! You'd not catch an Englishman doing that, would you? The fool said he was afraid we'd kill ourselves with so much drink, and that he'd be blamed for supplying it."

I heard the host now speak. He requested them to go to bed, and drink no more; warned them that they would severely suffer in their healths from such terrible excess, and that the character of his house would be endangered by it. They understood enough of Italian to make out that the host wanted to prevent them from drinking any more, and began calling him abusive names.

"They had not," they said, "egg-shell heads, like Italians, who could only drink sour lemonade, or as sour wine of their own making. No; *they* were men with sound pates."

The host retired, shaking his head, turning up his eyes, and invoking half the saints in the calendar to bear witness that *he* had warned these drunkards, and that it was not *his* fault if evil came of their excesses. The Rosolio was highly praised; and, if I might judge by the noise of the glasses, done ample justice to. The voice and accents of Figgins became so thick as to be almost unintelligible; and he complained that he did not know what had come to him, but he believed he saw double.

"For—only—just—now," said he, bringing out the words with an effort, and with a pause between each, "I'll be hanged if I didn't think I saw you two fellows filling my glass twice oftener than your own—a thing that I know to be impossible—for you are both too fond of good liquor to let me have a double share."

I heard the host called; heard the three men stagger out of the room to their sleeping apartments; and, disgusted and horrified beyond measure by the scene to which I had been a listener, I was so troubled that I hardly knew what step I had best take. After a few minutes' reflection, it occurred to me that it would be highly culpable to let the innocent host, or the character of his house suffer, by allowing the intended robbery to take place. And yet, how prevent it without involving myself with miscreants who had planned it, and making my vicinity known to the ruffian I so much wished to avoid? At length I resolved to steal down stairs, and tell the landlord that to prevent danger to his house, in case of Figgins having a fit, he being the most drunk, it would be wise for him and one of his men to have a pallet placed in the passage, outside the door of Figgins's chamber, so that if he were seized with illness, assistance could be promptly afforded him.

"Ah, Signor! I feared something serious would come of all this drinking. These three men, brutes they should rather be called, drank at supper and after, no less than eight bottles of Marsala, the strongest wine we have, Signor; and he who ordered everything, came down himself, and insisted, in spite of all my remonstrances, on having three bottles of Rosolio taken up to his friends."

"Go up at once and take your place at the

door of the drunken man's room. It is the only way to prevent danger to you," said I. And the host, impressed by my manner with the urgency of the case, immediately followed my advice, and thus prevented the intended robbery.

I left Salerno early next morning, long before these base men had awaked from their slumbers. The landlord descended to receive the amount of my bill; but he had taken the wise precaution of leaving his man at the same spot where both had passed the night.

"I never closed my eyes for a moment, Signor," said he; "and in the night one of these persons came from his bedroom towards that where his two companions slept, but, seeing us, went away; and the other got up two or three times and opened the bedroom door softly—looked out—and told us we need not remain, for that his companion was quietly sleeping off the effects of the wine he had drunk. Indeed we could hear him snoring loudly, but I would not leave my post."

I felt relieved when I had quitted the Albergo, and breathed the fresh air; the atmosphere of the inn, charged with the mingled odors of the libations and tobacco consumed by the knaves, caused me to experience headache and sickness, and created a disgust which their moral turpitudes served well to increase in my mind.

"What wretches to be let loose on society," thought I; "of what are they not capable? With such associates how soon might I not expect another demand from the vile Figgins! And was this system of exaction and plunder to go on for ever? Was I to be always the prey of a ruffian, dead to every feeling, who lavished on his infamous companions the money wrung from me? Was the patrimony of my child to be thus squandered until exhausted; and when no more remained to buy the silence of Figgins, might not the exposure and disgrace, to avoid which I had sacrificed it, fall on me, and stain the name of my daughter?"

Such were the bitter reflections that filled my mind as I retraced my steps to Naples to rejoin my child.

I determined to remove her to Sorrento, for at least a few weeks, and then decide where I had best go in order to avoid the pursuit of Figgins. With what different feelings did I retrace the same route, which only three days previously had afforded me so much pleasure as almost to banish, for the time being, the recollection of the wretch who rendered my life so miserable. Now the beautiful scenery was scarcely noticed, or, if looked at, the hated image of my tormentor presented itself, and destroyed every picture. There were moments—and I shudder as I recall them—that the hope occurred that this vile man might, sooner or later, meet his death at the hands of his infamous companions, or from the effects of the orgies in which they encouraged him; and that thus I should be released from his power. But better thoughts arose, and I felt it would be a heinous sin to desire the death of one so steeped in guilt as to be indeed unfit to die.

## CHAPTER XLI.

I FOUND my daughter well, and, in my partial eyes, increased in beauty and intelligence. I lost not a moment, after our things could be packed, in setting out for Capua; whence I led the postilion who drove me to believe I was immediately to proceed to Rome, as soon as I had looked at the antiquities in the vicinity of the town, to be conducted to which I demanded a ciccone at the inn. I listened patiently to his prolix account of the ruins we were examining, in order to give time to the Neapolitan postilion to leave Capua; and seldom, I dare say, had he found any stranger devote so long a time to the task.

When I returned to the inn, I ascertained that the postilion had left for Naples; and, having ordered dinner to be got ready, that no chance should occur of my overtaking him on the road, I strolled out 'till it was ready. The repast proved that Capua no longer maintained its ancient renown for enervating, by its luxuries, those who stopped in it, for never was a less tempting dinner beheld; and when a very small portion of it was despatched, I, to the evident surprise of the nurse and my man-servant, ordered post-horses, and arranged that they should take us to Castelamare, where I intended to pass the night, and proceed next morning to Sorrento.

A douceur to the postilion won his assent to this measure; and, as I had calculated it would be dusk before we should pass through Naples, our doing so would not be known, and I should consequently elude the vigilance of Figgins to discover my abode. I had heard him the previous night announce to his companions his intention of not returning to Naples for two days, and then coming by sea, so I felt sure I had no chance of encountering him on the road.

My plan succeeded perfectly. I arrived late at night at Castelamare, and left it early next morning for Sorrento; the exquisite beauty of the scenery of which made me rejoice that I had chosen it for a temporary *sejour*. I engaged a house by the week, in the environs, and, in a few hours, was comfortably established in it.

Those who have not seen Sorrento and its neighborhood, can form no notion of the beauty of the place. Orange groves in abundance surround the town, the golden fruit amidst its green boughs shining beneath the azure sky, while the snowy flowers sent forth their fragrant odor to every breath of air. The sea bathed the town with its blue and pellucid waters, which broke on the shore with a soft and gentle murmur. White villas, peeping from orange groves, intersected the surrounding country, while majestic pines and cedars lifted their dark green branches on high. Never had I beheld aught so lovely as Sorrento, which far, infinitely far, surpassed my expectations, as well as every description I had heard or read of it. No gloom, no sorrow, could resist the benign influence of the beautiful scenery and balmy air of this earthly paradise. Here I felt that if free from the pursuit of the wretch Figgins, I could for ever dwell, and wear away life, unsated with the charms of such an abode. Day after day I rambled in the environs; one day ascending the steep hills that en-

circle the town, and the next exploring the sea-girt grottoes along the picturesque shore. Or I would enter a boat, and sail on the smooth and sparkling sea for hours, or pause before the house where the unfortunate Tasso, when fortune frowned on him, came in his misery, to seek an asylum with his sister. In this humble abode he found the repose denied him in a palace, and his tortured heart was soothed by sisterly affection. The recollection of his fate drew me from the contemplation of my own troubles, and I was ready to admit, that if the great and gifted poet could not escape a life of misfortune, men of the common herd, like myself, should not hope to be exempted from its heavy trials, but learn to submit to them with patience. How long was this noble poet the solitary occupant of a dreary cell! Shut out from the light of Heaven, and not permitted to breathe the fresh air—tortured almost into the insanity into which his cruel persecutor wished to have it believed he was fallen—how must he, with the sensitiveness which forms one of the peculiar characteristics of poets, have felt the terrible privations and hardships to which he was condemned! And I, who could wander at will among the beautiful scenes that courted my eye, who could bask in the sunshine, or recline in the shade, as inclination prompted, had counted myself among the wretched of earth's sons, and had longed to lay down the load of life!

Before the heavy afflictions of the great and gifted, we become ashamed of having been wholly engrossed by our own; and this I experienced now. I had so often with terror, mingled with deep humility, doubted my own sanity, that I felt a peculiar interest and sympathy in the fate of Tasso; and now, while wandering where his steps had often turned, I fancied I could identify his thoughts and feelings with my own. This going out of oneself, as it were, is a relief, for while we experience sympathy for the griefs of others, we forget our own, or at least remember them less bitterly.

I formed an acquaintance with the good pastor of Sorrento. Struck by my melancholy countenance and deep mourning, he came to offer me all the consolation in his power, the use of his library, and occasional companionship, if acceptable to me. I was glad to avail myself of both; for his frank and gentle manners, as well as his benevolent aspect, conciliated my good will. I resumed my habit of reading, and with a book in my hand would wander out to some secluded spot, where, stretched on the ground, I would for hours peruse some favorite author, occasionally laying down the volume to gaze around on the bright and beautiful views that on every side met my eyes.

My grief for the loss of my beloved Louisa became softened down into a tender melancholy that I would not, if I could, forget. She was often present in my thoughts. Her affection was remembered with fervent gratitude, and the idea of ever replacing her was as foreign to my mind, as if triple the years I now numbered had been added to my age. Her image was enshrined in my heart, and there worshipped as is that of a saint by a devotee, who would think it little less than sacrilege to expose the object of his adoration to other eyes.

My child grew daily more like her dear mother. Not only did her features and the expression of her countenance strikingly resemble those of her parent, but the tones of her voice often made my heart thrill, so similar were they to my wife's.

My acquaintance with the good pastor had now grown into an intimacy that was not without charms for me. He was a simple and pious man, who knew little of the world except through books, and who devoted all his time to his religious duties, and to works of charity. To him, the poor of his parish never appealed in vain, either for pecuniary aid, or Christian counsel. He looked on his poor neighbors as his peculiar charge, and often were their wants relieved at the expense of his own comforts. For them he had studied medicine, and kept a dispensary, attending not only to the care of souls, but also to the cure of bodies; and constantly occupied for others, he had hardly time to think of self. His was indeed a useful life, and it brought "its own exceedingly great reward" in a tranquil mind, and a heart filled with charity for human kind. The erring found him ever ready to commiserate the consequences of their sins, while pointing out and reproving their faults, and the good were encouraged to persevere in goodness by his approbation.

With Il Padre Maroni I visited the poor, I learned to become acquainted with their wants, and through his hands to relieve them; and found so much simplicity and frankness, joined to kind-heartedness among them, as to wholly conquer the prejudices strangers are so prone to impute against the natives of all countries but their own, and which, through either indolence or want of opportunity, they seldom take the pains to correct.

Il Padre Maroni was greatly beloved in his neighborhood. Never did he pass the door of a peasant, that a blessing did not follow his steps. The very children lisped his name with pleasure, and ran to meet him, and kiss his hand when he appeared. These grateful creatures began to like me too. The favor and confidence shown me by their worthy pastor was a passport to theirs; and I felt pleased with their frank cordiality, and encouraged it by every kindness in my power. There is a charm, when far from one's native land, in meeting good-will from strangers. How little, too, does it cost to conciliate it with a people so simple and naturally grateful as the Italians are! When I witnessed the increase to their comforts, which very trifling sums could effect, I experienced a self-reproach at thinking how little I had done at home for the poor in my neighborhood; and I wrote to the good clergyman of my parish, and sent him money to distribute to them.

This step quieted my conscience a little; but I was reminded how much good the large sums I had lavished to buy the silence of the vile Figgins would have effected, and I writhed as it occurred to me that I was still, in spite of my precautions to elude him, liable to another invasion, whenever his purse should become empty. Had he not discovered me in Sicily, when I believed myself secure in the ignorance of my whereabouts, and had he not told me that

it was in vain for me to endeavor to conceal myself from him? I trembled lest he should trace me to Sorrento, where I had, for the first time for years, found a little repose; and a consciousness of my insecurity again poisoned the peace I had lately been enjoying. I had come to Sorrento, to have breathing time in its seclusion to determine on my future plans to avoid Figgins.

Yet although no day passed by without my having thought of this man, I had postponed forming any resolution, and, like a school-boy during vacation, enjoyed the present reprieve from care, leaving painful reflections to the future. Why, thought I, should I anticipate trouble before it comes? If Figgins discovers I have been at Naples, he will learn that I left it for Rome, and will believe I have returned to England. At Capua I was unknown, and as no person in Naples is aware of my being here, I may surely count on being safe.

Thus I reasoned with myself. But although it is said that we are prone to believe what we wish, it was not so in my case. A latent presentiment that this wretch would discover my abode, took possession of my mind, and I felt that I should, sooner or later, be driven from Sorrento. And as this dread haunted me, I became more than ever attached to the place. No one over whom the doom of exile from the home he loved was impending, ever clung more to the yearning desire to continue in it, than I now did to remain in this enchanting spot. Every time I gazed on its beauties, I sighed at the thought that I could not count on making it my home; for to return to Wales, to the scene of that event which had changed the current of my life, and poisoned my happiness, I felt to be impossible.

We are all more or less influenced by those near us. The chameleon, which is said to take its color from the object in closest proximity, could not be more affected than I was by the person with whom I had the most frequent intercourse. Il Padre Maroni's simplicity of heart and goodness had drawn me into a sincere regard for him; I liked his society, and a portion of the calmness and tranquillity of his life seemed to be infused into mine while we daily met. He was, with all his simplicity and ignorance of the world and its usages, so right-minded, so charitable, and so pious, that an atmosphere of purity and goodness seemed to surround him, from which I dreaded to remove myself, as much as ever the inmate of a convent dreaded to quit the peaceful solitude, where he had found repose, to enter the busy world, of which he felt an instinctive terror.

I had experienced from strangers, wholly unprejudiced, either for or against me, by any previous reports, a good-will that on increased intimacy had grown into friendship. The friends I had made were among the most excellent of men, Doctor Martelli at Turin, the Signor Bertucci at Naples, and Il Padre Maroni at Sorrento.\* The regard these worthy individuals had conceived for me, had in a great measure vanquished the timidity and mistrust implanted in my breast, by the avoidance and dislike evinced towards me by the companions of my youth.

I had, in truth, previously to my sojourn in Italy, believed that I was fated to pass through

life without a friend, and my heart pined for this blessing, which the last days of my dear Neville had taught me to appreciate. Now that I had secured a friend, on the stability of whose attachment I felt that I could count, I could not bear to leave him, and Sorrento consequently became dearer to me than ever.

## CHAPTER XLII.

MORE bitterly than ever did I now reproach myself for not having boldly met the first demand of Figgins with defiance. My utter folly and madness, in having acceded to it, had sealed my doom. That act of insanity had alone placed me in the power of a wretch, whose reckless extravagance would entail a frequent recurrence of his exactions, and I should not only drag on existence in perpetual terror of exposure, lest in his fits of inebriety he should betray my secret, but with the conviction that my whole fortune could not suffice to satisfy the ever-recurring demands I anticipated that he would make. Rendered gloomy by these reflections, I sought to dissipate them, and wandered forth into the balmy air. I directed my course to my favorite walk, the brow of a hill on the opposite side of Sorrento, commanding a view of the sea and surrounding country, so vast and beautiful, that often had the contemplation of it chased painful thoughts away, and soothed my distracted mind.

I took a volume from my pocket, and stretched beneath a group of chestnut trees, whose foliage afforded a shade from the too fervid rays of the sun, I was deep in its contents, when the sound of approaching footsteps met my ear. A presentiment of evil flashed through my mind, and yet it was no unusual thing for persons to visit this spot, which was pointed out to strangers as commanding the most extensive view in the environs, and often previously had persons visited it while I was there. But the truth is, the state of my nerves had rendered me superstitious, and I had remarked, that when thinking more than ordinarily of certain persons, it had frequently occurred, that I had either seen or heard of them very soon after. I had thought the previous day and night a good deal of Figgins, and no sooner did I hear the approaching footsteps, than it instantly flashed on me that they were his. I kept my eyes still fixed on the page, but the letters seemed to dance before them, and I was wholly unconscious of their sense. The footsteps came nearer, and at last paused close by me. Still I turned not, though a tremor thrilled my frame. A forced cough, as if to arrest my attention, failed to draw me from my book, and then a hand was laid on my shoulder, from the contact with which I started as if a serpent had stung me, and beheld the hated Figgins standing by my side.

"I am sorry to have started you so," said he; "I coughed on purpose to rouse you, but you were so taken up by your book you never heeded it. It's an advantage you gentlemen possess over us, that you can find pleasure in reading.

It's only one of many advantages you have, and we poor devils would be badly off, if we did not sometimes by a lucky chance get some hold on the rich, in order to draw away a little of the gold which they don't know what to do with. Now if I could find pleasure in reading, I need not be driven to gaming and drinking, to pass away my time, and then I would not be obliged to come back to you for money."

"When I last foolishly consented to give you so considerable a sum at Palermo," said I, assuming as severe and stern an air as I could summon up, "it was on the express condition that you should make no more demands on me."

"That's a condition easier made than kept," replied he. "If I had been lucky at play, you would not have seen me; but as I have not, here I am. I want three hundred pounds. It's no great sum after all, so you need not make a bother about it. Everything has got so dear, that money vanishes before one thinks it's half gone. Time hangs so devilish heavy on my hands, that I can't get rid of the old codger without pitting him against the blind jade Fortune, or drowning him in wine. Now if, as I said before, I could pass away whole hours, as you do, in reading, I should require less money; but then, on t'other side, I do more good to trade than you do."

The cool effrontery of this speech so excited my anger and indignation, that I felt disposed to hurl the wretch who uttered it from the top of the declivity where we stood. Conscious, however, of my own inferior strength, prudence prevented my making the attempt, although I could not master my muscles sufficiently to prevent my countenance revealing my feelings. Figgins noticed this, for he assumed a quieter demeanor.

"I do not wish to enter on the subject of your tastes or propensities," observed I, with *hauteur*. "The point in question now is, whether or not I will consent to furnish means for their indulgence; and I tell you, that seeing how you have lavished the two large sums I have been already so foolish as to give you, on the pledge that you would never trouble me again, I must positively decline any further advance."

The fellow looked at me inquiringly, as if to see whether he had really understood me rightly, and seeing the determined expression of my countenance, his became flushed with rage into a dull crimson hue that increased its ferocity.

"So, then," said he, "I am to understand that you will not come down with the sum I demand? Think well what you are about before you provoke me. Once I have let out the secret on which your character, aye, and your life too, depends, it will be too late to repent that, for the sake of a few paltry hundreds, which you can well spare, you allowed me to bring you to justice. Aye, you may look big, and pretend to doubt my power to ruin you, but you are no such fool as *really* to have the slightest doubt on the subject, for you're not the man to have given me five hundred pounds for nothing, and two more to the back of 'em, if you were not perfectly certain that you were wholly in my power. It's all folly holding back, or argufying the topic. By this time you ought to be well convinced that

I am a determined man, and will go through with whatever I take in hand. You saw how I defeated your cunning scheme to deceive me when you went from Nice to Turin, and how I found you out at Palermo. And, last of all, when you wanted me to lose all trace of you, by pretending to go to Rome, and then only went to Capua, where you stopped, and came right off here, fancying yourself safe from me—here I am, come to prove to you that you can no more get rid of me, go where you will, than you can be quit of your shadow. Every step you take I am made acquainted with, and will continue to know while we both live. You are like a poor fly caught in a spider's web; every move you make to escape only serves to entangle you more and more in the meshes of my net, as happens to the silly fly in that of the spider. Once for all, you can't help yourself, so don't let us waste time in words, but give me the money."

"When I committed the folly of giving you money before," answered I, "it was wholly through a dread, that if you repeated the words I uttered in my delirious ravings, I should be thought actually insane; and as I have a child, to whose future prospects such a belief would be most injurious, all the world dreading to form an alliance with the offspring of a madman, I gave you the money to prevent your letting that supposition get abroad."

Figgins screwed up his mouth and whistled, looked at me with a vulgar leer, and then said, "Oh, that's the dodge, is it? But you forget that I went to Wales, *not* to inquire whether you were mad or not, but to find out whether any lady had fallen over a rock (I knew she had been *thrown*), and to search for the body, which I found, and have ready to bring forward as evidence against you."

My nervous system terribly shaken by this recurrence to the one fatal event of my life, I no longer felt the courage or firmness that but a few minutes previously had animated my breast. The loudness of Figgins's voice alarmed me, lest some English traveller might by chance be within hearing; and I suppose my altered countenance revealed to him that this was the moment to take advantage of my returning weakness.

He elevated his tone still higher, and almost screamed his threats. "Yes," cried the wretch, "I will at once go before a magistrate and give you up to justice. I have been too quiet, too patient with you, that's what I have been; but I'll be so no longer, I'll send you to the hangman, and then I wonder whether it will be worse for your daughter, on whom you pretend to dote, to be known as the child of a man that was hanged for murder, aye, and for the murder of her own aunt too, or as the child of a madman, which you so much dreaded, that you have given me some hundreds not to run the risk of it. A likely story indeed! You may tell that to the marines, but I'm too old a sailor to believe it. But I'm wasting time in talking to you, and so I'll be off," and away he walked.

Oh the misery, the madness of that moment! my brain seemed to be on fire. I trembled in every limb—the agony of years was compressed into one terrible shock. I seemed to behold a

gazing crowd pressing around me, a scaffold with all its fearful apparatus reared high in the distance, and the burning brand of shame impressed its indelible stamp on my brow, searing and entering it like a hot iron.

Overcome by mental torture I fell to the earth, and lost in a long and deep swoon the consciousness of my misery. When I recovered, I saw the wretch Figgins on his knees, bending over me. I shuddered, and closed my eyes to shut him from my sight. I found the burning taste of brandy in my mouth and throat, and really thought he had forced me to swallow some deleterious mixture while I had been insensible. I felt a bottle applied to my lips by this man, and it was only by using my utmost exertions that I could prevent him from pouring its contents again into my stomach.

"Come, come, don't be so obstinate and foolish!" said he. "It was a devilish lucky thing for you that I happened to look back and saw you fall, for with your tight cravat, and nobody near to help you, you would certainly have been strangled had I not come to your aid. And it was quite as lucky that I happened to have my dram bottle not empty, for it was the brandy I forced down your throat that brought you back to life; and a pretty sight of trouble I had to open your teeth, which were clenched as tight together as if you were dead. If you have any gratitude in you, you must feel obliged to me for saving your life. What would have become of your poor child, in a foreign land, if you had died here?"

I was so weakened and exhausted by the shock on my nervous system, that when Figgins mentioned my daughter, with reference to her isolated state had I not recovered, a violent fit of hysterical tears and sobs ensued; nor could I subdue them, although well aware that this unmanly exhibition of effeminate weakness would encourage him to make future demands.

"Come, come," resumed Figgins, "don't give way to your feelings. Nothing grows on a man so much as nervousness, if indulged. How much better would it have been for you to have given me the money I asked, than to have aroused my anger, and forced me to be harsh with you?"

The wheedling tone he assumed was precisely that which an artful nurse might adopt towards a foolish, spoiled child; and while it made me hate him still more than before, were that possible, made me despise myself for the weakness which led him to presume to use it.

"Leave me," said I. "I wish to be alone."

"I will do no such thing," replied Figgins. "You are not in a fit state to be left to yourself. Why, at this very moment you tremble like an aspen leaf, and require some one to lean on to reach home. It's all nonsense our quarrelling. We can't do without each other. My silence is absolutely necessary for your character—for your life—and your money is indispensably necessary to me."

I was so paralysed, so overpowered, that I was no longer capable of resisting the artful pleadings of this villain. Not that they made any impression on my reason, for, even while he spoke, I knew that I was lost; it yielded



But my tortured brain and exhausted frame, now undergoing the terrible re-action of excitement, impressed me with a conviction that both must give way unless I could free myself, though even but for a temporary release from this harpy; and to gain this reprieve, mean and cowardly dastard as I was, I once more consented to make terms with him. I remained silent for some time, and Figgins again renewed his demand.

"I will pledge myself, and this time I swear I will keep my pledge, not to demand a single shilling from you for three years to come if you will give me the three hundred pounds I want. In three years much may happen—death may release you from me; or you may die, and so be freed from any future demands from me."

Three years' freedom from seeing or hearing from this miscreant appeared to my bewildered mind, at that moment, cheaply purchased at the expense of the sum required; but a latent notion that he would break through this engagement, as well as he had done through the two former ones, suggested itself. But even this suspicion did not hinder me from yielding to his demand, so desirous was I to be rid of him, if only for a short time. "For this once," said I, "I will give you the money; but, remember, if you break faith, expect nothing more from me. Call at my house, and tell my servant to come to me here. I will go to Naples to-morrow, get the sum wanted from my banker, and if you will meet me at the Mola, I will give it to you."

"Ah! I see you are too proud, or too revengeful—perhaps both—to take my arm to reach your house. Surely I'm as good as your servant for this service?" And Figgins looked angry.

"I will be candid with you," said I. "I do prefer my servant's arm to yours."

"More fool you," observed he. "Your servant respects you, because he knows nothing of your guilt, and you are not in his power. You have brought yourself to my level through my knowledge of your crime, and need not be so very proud and squeamish as to refuse my arm when I offer it."

"I know more of you than you imagine," replied I, angered by his insolence. "I am well acquainted with your past life, and the robbery of the jewels, for which the unfortunate lady's-maid paid the penalty."

He gazed at me for a moment, in speechless astonishment, his face becoming deadly pale, and then, in evident embarrassment, said, "I don't know where you have picked up that old story, not a word of which is true; but no matter, true or false, what is it to you? Were you to charge me with it, you have no proof to bring forward, whereas I can bring home to you the crime which has placed you for ever in my power; so the less you refer to by-gones the better, I can tell you. And why can you not give me a cheque on your banker, which I can present and get cash for at Naples, without your having the trouble of going there?" demanded he.

"Because I do not wish it," replied I.

"Ah, well, it doesn't make much difference as long as I get the money," said he; "and to-

morrow I will be on the look-out for you on the Mola. At what hour will you be there?"

"At three o'clock."

"Good bye, till then; I'll send your servant to you."

And away walked Figgins, whistling as he went, leaving me a prey to bitter reflections, among which, a deep sense of shame at my own pusillanimity was not the least. My servant came to me, stating that a stranger had called at my house to tell him to do so, and I was glad to find that Figgins had not gone in person. Returning to my house, I encountered this vile fellow in company with two villainous looking men, who, it instantly occurred to me, must be his companions at Salerno. He looked at me, but gave no mark of recognition; and although my servant remarked the circumstance of "that impudent fellow Figgins not having taken off his hat as I passed," I was glad, that, by not doing so, he had avoided drawing the attention of his companions to me.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

THE interview with Figgins had so shattered my nerves, that the evening that followed it was spent in a state of such despondency and mental prostration, that, although I had recourse to an opiate, I could not obtain a single hour's repose during the ensuing night, and I arose the next morning so ill and nervous, that I was little equal to the visit to Naples. However, it must be undertaken, but I felt so weak and languid, that dreading a return of my fainting fit of the previous day, I determined to take my servant with me. I was haunted by the reflection that the vile companions of Figgins, who had drawn a conclusion that he had, on a former occasion, obtained money by his visit to Palermo, would now date the reinforcement of his finances to his excursion to Sorento; and furnished with this clue, and perhaps aided by his indiscretion, trace me to be the donor of his riches, and naturally enough concluding that such large sums would not be given without some very urgent reason, discover that Figgins held me in his power. They, I had found out at Salerno, entertained the worst opinion of him, and would not be slow to set all their cunning to work to ascertain the secret by which he obtained such liberal supplies, for the purpose of turning it to their own profit.

"What, then," thought I, "if instead of one harpy, I should have three pouncing on me?" and I trembled at the bare notion. "Had I not heard the indiscreet boastings Figgins had made to his associates? And were not they precisely the persons most likely to leave no means untried to discover his secret, and convert it to their own advantage? Of their cupidity had I not had oral demonstration? That their curiosity and suspicions had been excited, their accompanying Figgins to Sorento proved, and justified my belief that they were bent on not losing sight of him. Might they not have followed him to the spot where our interview had taken place,

and have thus traced the money he was about to receive to have come from me?"

As these thoughts passed through my mind, inflicting indescribable torture, I felt that I must leave Sorrento, and again endeavor to elude the wretch who embittered my existence. But where was I to go? Had he not traced me when I believed myself out of his reach? Had he not baffled all my schemes to evade his search? At length it occurred to me that in the *Diario di Napoli* of the previous morning, I had read that a packet was to sail, on the evening of Thursday (this was Wednesday), for Malta. I would engage accommodation in it for myself and family; send back my servant to discharge my bills, and remove my child and her nurse to Naples the following morning, arranging that they were to drive direct to the Mola, where they were to embark without having gone to any inn, and where I would be in attendance to see them on board. I would, after I had given the money to Figgins, pretend to return to Sorrento; instead of doing which, I would go to a hotel where I was not known, and remain *incognito* there until it was time to meet my child and her attendants on the Mola.

By this, as I thought, well-concocted plan, I would defeat the cunning Figgins to discover my retreat; and yet a dread crept over me that as he had hitherto, by what means I could not divine, discovered my movements, so might he ascertain that I had gone to Malta. It was, however, worth trying, and having arrived at Naples, and after writing to Il Padre Maroni, to say I was suddenly summoned to England, which letter my servant was to take back to Sorrento, I proceeded to my banker's; and in addition to the three hundred for the odious Figgins, and sufficient to discharge my rent and bills at Sorrento, I drew a considerable sum to take with me to Malta, in order that even my banker should not know that I had proceeded there. I then went to keep my appointment with Figgins, whom I found with blood-shot eyes and swollen countenance, giving every indication that he was either still under the influence of intoxication, or that he had not yet slept off its effects. I advanced to the least frequented part of the Mergellina, and motioned to him to approach me. When he drew near, there was such an expression of stolid brutality in his face, that I saw at a glance something had gone wrong with him.

"Here is the money," said I, handing him the gold.

"It's all right, I dare say," observed he; "but since we parted, I have got into a terrible scrape. I haven't been to bed all night, and have a headache enough to split my skull. I have two friends, and pretty friends they are too, who made me play with them last night when I was so tipsy as not to know one card from another, and they have won a hundred pounds from me, and insist on being paid. This will only leave me two hundred; not enough to keep me going for three years, as I promised. Give me therefore another hundred, and I'll break off with these sharks, who stick to me like leeches, feast like fighting-cocks at my expense, and when they've made me drink more than my head can stand, get me to play with them, and win my

money. They are two regular blood-suckers; and if I wasn't in their power—"

Here he stopped and looked embarrassed.

"Go away, go, as fast as you can," said he; "I see them coming, and they must not see us together."

He walked off in an opposite direction, and I turned away into a house, the door of which happened to be open, to inquire whether or not lodgings were to be let there; taking care to prolong my conversation with the servant of the house, until they had time to be out of sight. I then went to a hotel, where I had never stopped before, and having despatched my servant to Sorrento, remained within doors the rest of the day, nor left the inn the following one until the dusk of the evening, when I drove to the Mola to meet my child and her attendants; and they having arrived soon after, I took berths for them and myself, and had my carriage put on board. There were so few passengers, that I was enabled to have the best cabin for my daughter and myself; and having taken possession of it, I did not leave it during the voyage, lest any one on board should recognise me, and so betray the place of my destination.

My last interview with Figgins had convinced me that I could hope for no rest while I remained within his reach. It was clear that his vile companions were not only determined to plunder him, but to discover the source whence he drew the money that supplied their reckless course of extravagance. He, it appeared, had just sense enough left to guess their aim; but in the state of constant inebriety which they encouraged him in, how long was it probable that he could retain sufficient reason and prudence to defeat their machinations, and guard the secret they were so anxious to discover!

How fortunate I considered myself to have got away from Naples, and to have left no trace behind me of whither I had gone. I reflected on the retribution which had fallen on the wretch Figgins, who while plundering me in the belief that I was wholly in his power, was himself the prey of the two villains who had no more mercy on him than he had evinced to me. How bitterly had he reviled them, apparently wholly unconscious that he himself was pursuing precisely the same system of conduct to me that he so censured in them. But thus it ever is with selfish and unprincipled men, who are ready to let fall the whole weight of their condemnation on whoever tries to wrong or injure *them*, but who wrong or injure others without one sentiment of remorse.

We arrived at Malta after a safe but tedious passage, and the sound of my native language, and the uniform of British soldiers, gave me a feeling of security not experienced since I had left England. The cleanliness of the place, too, pleased me, and before many hours had elapsed, I found myself established in a comfortable abode, where I hoped to enjoy some tranquil days, free from the presence of the odious Figgins.

My daughter grew more companionable every day, and my happiest hours were those passed with her. Never did the most enthusiastic Dutch florist watch over the opening petals of his choicest flower with such interest and delight, as I did over the opening ~~tubers~~ of ~~the~~

child. Her facility in acquiring everything I taught her, seemed to me little less than miraculous, and her memory in retaining what she learned was equally surprising. Often while pressing my lips to her open brow, did I vow, that never should it wear the blush of shame for me, if the sacrifice of my own feelings, nay, of my existence itself, could prevent it. To be loved by this pure and innocent creature as I was, was the one drop of comfort vouchsafed to sweeten my bitter cup of life; and to remain blameless in her eyes when arrived at womanhood, and worthy of her affection, seemed to me to be the sole end and aim of my existence.

I had been about three weeks at Malta, when walking one day at Valetta, I encountered Figgins accompanied by his villainous associates. My feelings at this encounter it would be vain to attempt to describe. The conviction that henceforth it would be useless to endeavor to escape him, took possession of me, filling me with a terror that almost shook my reason. The companions of Figgins stared at me with inquisitive glances, but he took no notice of me, and passed as if I were a perfect stranger. Encouraged by this prudence on his part, I mustered up courage enough to take another turn, and confront the trio, and this *manœuvre* seemed to put an end to the suspicions of Figgins's companions, for they no longer examined me with searching glances, but I observed they looked anxiously at every respectably dressed man they met, and then glanced at Figgins, who seemed aware that he was watched.

I returned to my home, my mind filled with presentiments of evil. I had not only Figgins now to dread, but his designing and unprincipled companions, whose cupidity, excited by the knowledge that he had some means of obtaining large sums of money, would leave no scheme untried to discover the source whence it flowed, and by acquiring his secret, convert it to their own account. The conversation I had heard between these two miscreants at Salerno, when he was absent from the room, had made me aware that they were capable of any turpitude, and I trembled at the dread, that, instead of having one ruffian to contend with, I should find myself in the toils of three.

That evening a letter was brought me, the contents of which were as follows:—

"Did I not tell you that it was in vain you tried to hide yourself from me, and that, go where you might, I should soon find you out? I am no blunderer. I have my spies everywhere; and were you to go to the most remote spot on the globe, there would I discover you. But while you cannot escape from me, I, in turn, am entangled in the snare of two of the greatest brutes on earth. They have found out that I am supplied with money by some one, and, full of suspicion, have guessed the truth, or something very near it. They are too knowing to believe that I could get money for nothing, and suspect it is for holding my tongue about some secret dangerous to him from whom I obtain it. These rogues have fastened themselves on me. They live wholly at my expense; they cheat me at cards; and leave nothing *undone* to inveigle me out of my secret and yours.

I'll own the truth to you. My firm belief is, that if they could worm out the secret, my life would not be safe in their hands. They would get rid of me somehow or other, in order that *they only* should draw away your money for keeping the secret; and though you may think me extravagant and unreasonable in my demands on you, I'll be sworn you'd soon find the difference if you had to deal with them, for they would strip you of every shilling you possess; and when they had made you a beggar, would, in all probability, show you up to justice. I tried to escape from 'em at Naples, and embarked, as I thought, cunningly enough, without their knowing a word of my intention of coming here. But no sooner had we got out to sea, when the two rogues, to my utter surprise and dread, appeared on deck, and reproached me bitterly for having, as they said, attempted to play them such a trick. They watch me night and day; and I confess I am afraid they will do me a mischief. They got all the money you gave me at Naples out of me, as they did what you gave me at Palermo. My life is made miserable by 'em, and I never go to sleep without dread that, as they watch me, I may let out the secret in my slumber, as you did to me. It's no pleasure or comfort to me now to get money from you, when I know these cormorants, these wicked robbers, will drain me of every shilling of it. I hate 'em worse than poison; but what can I do? They are two against one. I am afraid to drink with 'em, and afraid to refuse when they force the liquor on me. I'm tired of high feeding and wine, which, like a fool, I at first thought I should never get too much of. The very sight of these two villains makes me tired of life and everything in it. I see but one way left to save myself, and to keep our secret close from them, for I can't answer for it when they make me tipsy, or when I talk in my sleep. The way I see, you will, I know, object to, nor can I wonder at it; but I'm sure it's the only safe plan; and that is, for you to let me live in your house, find me in everything I want, and leave me something to live on in your will, in case I should last the longest. This is the only way for me to get out of their hands; and don't refuse my offer, or it will be worse for us both. I'll say it's my intention to return to service, as all my money is spent. Let you inquire at the inns for an English servant, and I'll go round to each of 'em to offer myself, if a situation should be open. So you see the whole thing will appear quite natural. Once in your house, I'll make 'em understand that you don't allow followers, nor let your servants go out. They, finding that they can make no more out of me, will either go away or let me alone. Whatever crimes you may have committed, you are still a gentleman, and I'm sure I'll be safe under your roof. Do follow this advice for both our sakes. If you refuse, it may be the cause of our ruin. I will pass under your window to-morrow morning early; and if you drop a bit of paper, with 'Yes, or No,' on it, that will do.

"J. FIGGINS."

## CHAPTER XLIV.

My agitation while perusing this production was so great, that my hand shook so violently it could hardly retain the paper. Indignation at the terms of equality which it contained, mingled with terror, for my reason, even in the midst of my dread, admitted the prudence and wisdom of Figgins's suggestion. He felt his own weakness in the hands of his ruffian companions, and the consequences likely to result from it, and he besought me for my sake, as well as his, to rescue him from his perilous condition. And yet with the perfect conviction of the reasonableness of his advice, as well as of the danger of his being left with his present associates, my pride could not brook being treated by him in a tone of fellowship, and I angrily threw his letter from me, and trampled it under my feet.

Then came other and more bitter thoughts. "Was I, who revolted from the occasional sight of this man, to consent to have him a fixed resident beneath my roof, and be compelled to see him perpetually?" To bring a person of such licentious habits into the same house with my daughter and her female attendant, seemed to me nothing short of profanation, and I shuddered at the notion. Reflections of minor importance, but, nevertheless, very embarrassing, followed. I had at present the precise complement of male servants that I required, consisting of my own personal domestic, and a man engaged at whatever place I resided, and discharged when I left it. This number had been found sufficient for the service of my small establishment, and on what plea could I add a supernumerary to it without exciting surprise on the part of the servants already in my employment? Although I had never encouraged any remarks from my valet on Figgins, I could see that he had left an unfavorable impression on him; and then flashed across my mind the recollection, that at Sorrento, my servant had seen Figgins pass close by me, with his worthless companions, without paying me the mark of respect of taking off his hat, so universally offered by every servant when he encounters a former master! What would he think of my again taking into my service a man who had betrayed this want of respect? Would it not give rise to suspicion, as well as to surprise? Yes, I felt it would, it must; and yet these minor evils must give way before the great one of leaving Figgins any longer exposed to the machinations of his designing associates. But what if he, once an inmate beneath my roof, should forget his position, and presume to be familiar or insolent? Might I not be compelled to exclude him, and by so doing, draw down on me his anger and vengeance? My mind became unhinged and confused, as all the advantages and disadvantages which might be produced, by whichever line of conduct I adopted, presented themselves to it.

I paced up and down the room almost like a maniac, endeavoring to acquire sufficient coolness to form a resolution, but so many contending feelings tortured my excited brain, that I feared to trust to its decision. I undressed, and

threw myself on my bed, in the hope that a few hours' sleep might tranquillize me; but an opiate, to which I had recourse, failed to calm my senses, or induce sleep, and after an hour or two's fruitless efforts to repose, I left my couch, and opened the window to cool my fevered brow by the night breeze.

This refreshed and relieved me; and now I was better able to sift and compare the *pour et contre* of consenting to the proposal of Figgins; and when morning dawned, I had formed my determination to have an interview with him, to state explicitly the conditions on which I would accede to his request, and the line of conduct I expected him to pursue.

When I looked out on the starry heavens, so bright, so calm, not a breeze agitating the leaves of the orange trees in my balcony, and not a sound to be heard but the gentle murmur of the waves as they broke on the sea-girt isle, a deep sadness filled my soul. All nature seemed to slumber; mankind had found a temporary solace from the cares of life, but this solace was denied me. I, I alone, waked, while others in a sweet oblivion lost the sense of chagrin. Was it not enough that I was haunted by regret for the one terrible event that had clouded the sunshine of my existence, that I mourned with undying grief the loss of that angelic being whom ruthless death had snatched from me, but I must now be tortured by finding myself in the power of one whom I despised, whom I loathed; and to escape the greater evil of my secret being discovered by two wretches even more base, if possible, than himself, I must receive him beneath my roof, and bear his odious presence until death to him or me should relieve me from this galling penance?

How strong was the contrast afforded by the tranquil and beautiful scene commanded from my window, and the troubled thoughts that filled my breast! "O, Nature, lovely, beneficent Nature!" thought I, "am I never more to be permitted to enjoy the blessings thou canst bestow? Have I learnt to worship thee,—to feel my heart melt into tenderness and gratitude to the Creator, as I contemplate thy charms,—only to know that gnawing cares so torture me, that even the innocent pleasures thou canst confer I am too wretched to taste, and that only in the grave can I hope for rest!"

At length the grey dawn was followed by the rosy-streaked clouds that herald morning. Another day was opening, bringing to some a continuation of happiness,—to others, as to me, a prolongation of woe,—to all, a short-lived leaf in either the garland of bright flowers that illumine, or the cypress-wreath that shadows life with gloom. The coming day, like the preceding one, must fleet away, and bring us so many hours nearer to the goal to which we are all hastening—the grave. It is only the wretched that find consolation in this reflection; and often in my misery had I invoked it as now. But as the day became brighter, I was reminded that I must write to Figgins, and I seized a pen, and disguising my writing as much as I could, I wrote, "Be at my door, this night, at half-past twelve."

I had only time to twist the piece of paper, and put one or two brass coins in to prevent its being

blown away, when I saw him for whom it was intended appear. I watched narrowly to be certain he was not followed, and when he approached near the house I threw down the little parcel, saw him take it up, disappear quickly, and I closed my window, and once more threw myself on my bed.

When my servant came to me at my usual hour of rising, I said to him, that should he happen to hear of an English servant wanting a place, I should be glad to engage one.

"I beg your pardon, Sir, but I really think that with the Maltese man we now have, who is a sober, steady, active, and willing man, there is quite enough to get through the work, and more too."

I had anticipated this observation; and though annoyed, was not taken by surprise by it.

"Very likely," said I; "but I do not so much want a servant to do the work now, but a person who, in case I should be summoned suddenly to England on business, which is more than likely, could accompany me while I should leave you with my daughter."

This implied confidence mollified him, though I could see he was by no means pleased at the notion of my engaging a new servant.

"But pray, Sir, I beg pardon for asking, in what capacity is the person you require to be until you may be called to England?"

Here I felt puzzled what answer to make, and he increased my embarrassment by looking me steadily in the face, with an expression of anxiety and curiosity.

"The servant I intend to engage," said I, "must make himself generally useful."

"Am I to understand, Sir, that he is to be put over me? for if this is to be the case, I would rather at once resign my place."

Why did not my reason suggest to me at this moment the advisability of taking advantage of the suggestion, and letting my servant go away? But thus it ever was with me; my weakness and tergiversation always prevented my profiting by the opportunities thrown in my way to render my position less embarrassing, while there was yet time to take advantage of them; and it was only when too late that I became sensible that I had thrown them away!

Before giving myself time for a moment's reflection, I replied that the new servant was by no means to be placed above my present one; and, although still looking dissatisfied, he expressed his willingness to remain in my service.

I wrote a few lines, to be left at the inns and library at Malta, stating that an Englishman might hear of a situation with a gentleman who required a servant; and having sent them to be posted in the halls of those places, I walked forth, some hours after, ill at ease.

Almost the first persons I encountered were Figgins and his companions. None of the trio appeared to notice my presence, which afforded me an opportunity of observing them. Figgins looked depressed and fatigued, his associates flushed and angry. The two latter seemed to be quarrelling with him, while he appeared to maintain a dogged silence. I turned soon after, and walked near enough to them to overhear some of their words.

"Humbug, regular humbug," observed one. "We're too old birds to be caught with chaff. Where you found money before, you can find it again; for you'll never get us to believe you came to Malta for any other purpose than to follow some one on whom you have some claim."

"Yes, yes," said the other man, "it's no use whatsoever to try and himpose on us. We're not to be done, I can assure you; so out with the truth, or let us have some money. There's nothing to be made here. The natives are too sharp, and as for taking in the English officers here, it's not to be done."

I was afraid of being noticed by these men, if I continued any longer near them, so I turned away, convinced by what I had overheard that at least a portion of Figgins's statement to me was correct.

Slowly and heavily dragged on the hours during the remainder of that day. I wished for, yet dreaded the interview I had arranged with Figgins. I entertained such a strong personal antipathy to him, that his presence was absolutely hateful to me; and yet believing as I did that the project he had suggested was the sole one that could separate him from his designing associates, who, sooner or later, might discover his secret and mine, I was desirous that he should be removed from contact with them.

Restless and agitated, often did I pull out my watch to see if the time for our meeting was drawing near. An unhappy wretch, condemned to undergo some terrible operation under the knife of a surgeon, which he knows must be submitted to, or that his life will pay the forfeit, never experienced a greater desire to have it over, or a greater dread of the pain to be endured.

At length the whole family had retired to rest. All was silent in the house; and, giving a sufficient time to allow my servants to be wrapt in sleep, I stealthily opened the hall door, and in a moment Figgins stood within it, in evident trepidation. I closed the door noiselessly, made him take off his shoes, lest a creaking sound on the stairs should disturb any of the inmates, and guiding him by the arm, though I shrank with disgust from his touch, I led him to my room, taking care that the doors of both the adjoining ones should be secured.

He dropped into a chair the moment he entered; and this act of impertinent familiarity produced an instantaneous and disagreeable effect on my temper. He noticed it, I believe, for he said,

"I really can hardly stand, I'm so weak from agitation. I feared up to the very last moment that they would pounce out on me, and follow me here. Such a life as they have led me ever since we came to this place! They will insist on my pouring wine and spirits down my throat, do all I can to prevent it; and it is only by pretending to be tipsy, and falling into a sort of lethargic sleep, that I can save myself from being destroyed by them, they are so anxious to make a beast of me. To-night I took to my bed, pretending to be ill, and they, thinking me safe for the night went out to drink, so I got away. They have picked my pockets while I made believe to sleep,

and have ransacked my box. But they found nothing that could help them to make out where the money has come from. They're so mad that they can't get the secret out of me, that I sometimes think they are half-disposed to murder me;" and he turned pale and cast a glance of fear around him.

"I believe," observed I, "that you are in actual danger with these ruffians with whom you have connected yourself."

"Ah, Sir!" replied Figgins, "being in people's power," and he looked at me, "makes one keep bad company."

The application of this remark came so home to my feelings, that as I glanced at this wretch seated in my presence I keenly felt its force.

"But though convinced of your danger," resumed I, "and willing to extricate you from it, it is only on certain conditions that I can consent to receive you beneath my roof."

"Bear in mind, Sir," observed he, "that the danger is not solely confined to me. You are also exposed to it; therefore, in saving me, remember, you save yourself too."

This reflection vexed me, although I could not deny its truth. It was plain I had to deal with a man who would not let me think that he was imposed on as to the motive of any service I might render him.

"The conditions on which I can receive you," resumed I, "are as follows:—You must always remember that you are my servant, and must treat me with the respect due from a servant to his master."

He screwed up his mouth on one side in a comical way, and answered, "I suppose I must, before others."

I did not condescend to notice this impertinence, but resumed, "Your habits must be orderly, your conduct steady and sober."

"Oh! as for being sober," observed he, "I've got such a sickener of drinking ever since I have been bullied into it by the two villains that have fixed themselves on me, that I don't think I'll ever take to it again as long as I live, and as to being orderly, it's easy to be that when one's sober."

"But I wish to have an explicit understanding with you, a positive engagement, that you will be sober, orderly, and respectful while you continue in my house, before I consent to your entering it," said I, assuming as grave and dignified a manner as I could put on, for the purpose of awing Figgins.

"It is my intention to behave as well as I can, but no man can pledge himself weak as all men are, never to break through good resolutions. If you don't like me, and I don't like you, which may very probably be the case, why, we can part whenever I am wholly out of the clutches of the two rogues from whom I want to get away; and if ever I come within their reach again, I'll give you leave to call me the greatest fool alive."

I was compelled to be satisfied with this vague, undefined promise, if promise it could be called; and having told him who made it to go round to the places where I had posted up the notice that I wanted a servant, and then to present himself formally at my house, I dismissed

him from it as stealthily as I had admitted him, first taking especial care to ascertain from the window that no one was lurking near to see him depart, a precaution, I must do him the justice to say, he evinced as great an anxiety about as I did. I retired to my pillow, sick at heart—and, Heaven knows, little disposed to sleep.

## CHAPTER XLV.

I DID not leave my bed until late the following morning, and was only just done breakfast, when the Maltese servant (my English one having gone out to execute a commission for me) announced that a person wanted to see me. This person was Figgins; and I was glad he had come during the absence of Thomas, who knowing him at Nice, would very probably have expressed the bad opinion I guessed he entertained of him, and having done so previously to my engaging him, would, doubtless, think it strange that I should then have done so.

I settled all preliminaries with Figgins as quickly as I could. It was agreed that he was to enter my house the next day; and he then told me, that he had, ever since his sojourn at Naples, prepared his troublesome companions for leaving them, as he had oftentimes stated his intention of going to service again, could he but find a suitable place; a declaration, he said, which they wholly disbelieved, from having previously known that he had possessed large unaccountable, or at least unaccounted for, sums of money.

The truth was, the vain boastings of Figgins, when in his cups, had convinced his unworthy companions, that a fellow of intemperate habits, and with the power, however attained, of gratifying them, never would—never could—return to service again. Now, however, that he was putting his intention into effect, it remained to be seen what plan they would pursue; and on this point I felt quite as nervous as Figgins.

When Thomas returned from executing the commission I had given, he told me, that while absent he had heard of more than one servant wishing to enter my establishment.

"I engaged one while you were out," said I, affecting as much indifference of manner as I could; "and it happens to be the man who was in my family when I was ill at Nice."

"You don't mean Figgins, sir?" asked Thomas, with a look of such utter astonishment as brought the blood to my face, to conceal which, I turned, and affected to be busily occupied turning over the pages of an account-book on the table.

"Yes," replied I; "it is Figgins."

"Well, Sir, I am sorry you have engaged that man; for, if the truth must be spoken, I have not a good opinion of him."

I felt my face glow, and my ears tingle, but I took care that he could not see my countenance

"Had you any positive cause for your bad opinion?" inquired I.

"First, sir, he was not a sober man then, and was so prying and inquisitive, that he never ceased asking questions about the family, and where they came from. In short, sir, all manner of impertinent questions. I told you of this, sir, after you got better; and I thought you, too, sir, did not like him to sit up with you, or be near you."

"Did you tell me?—I had forgotten all about it; but now I do remember something faintly about it. I wish I had recollected it before I engaged him. Now—it is too late,—I have hired him."

"I'm afraid he has not mended with regard to his drinking," observed Thomas; "for I saw him once at Palermo, perfectly tipsy, and here, also, walking about with two very ill-looking fellows, no more sober than himself. Don't you remember, sir, the day you were taken ill out walking at Sorrento, when a strange man came to tell me to go to you; how, when you were returning home, leaning on my arm, we met this very Figgins, with the two men who are now at Malta? and he must surely have been very tipsy then, for though he passed close to you, sir, he never so much as took off his hat, or even touched it when he saw you."

"How very odd that I did not see him," observed I; "but, probably, he no more saw me than I did him."

"Don't you think, Sir," resumed Thomas, "that you could get off taking him, by making him a small present for the disappointment?"

"No, no! having hired him, I will give him a trial," replied I. "Curiosity is a very common defect; and I am sorry to say there are few sober servants like you to be met with, Thomas. Send your young lady to me, without delay." (I saw he was about to make another attempt to induce me to get rid of Figgins.) "Go quickly, for I want particularly to see her."

Thomas withdrew, evidently surprised and annoyed, leaving me pained and embarrassed, though not at all surprised, at the result of our interview; and it required all the winning wiles and fond caresses of my child, to restore me to aught resembling composure.

When Figgins presented himself, towards the evening, he looked so pale and haggard, that I guessed he had had some very disagreeable scene with his worthless companions; and this presentiment increased my own nervousness. He was, however, perfectly sober; and this was some comfort, for I feared he might have indulged in a parting potation with his companions, and have borne unmistakable proofs of the fact. I walked out, as was my usual custom, and saw, at a distance, the odious associates of Figgins, apparently in deep consultation together. An instinctive dread of encountering them, led me to turn my steps in another direction, although I had no definite notion what I had to fear, or what excuse they could make for addressing me.

I returned home, and Figgins opened the door to give me ingress. He whispered in my ear as I entered—

"I want to speak to you when all are asleep, and will go to your room."

I nodded assent and passed on. What could he have to say to me? A thousand painful conjectures presented themselves to my mind, each and all fraught with annoyance.

When Thomas served tea, I noticed a great change in his aspect—he looked offended and gloomy, seemed desirous to speak to me, but I gave him no opportunity, as I affected to be deeply occupied with a book. At length he broke silence, and after apologizing for interrupting me, begged leave to have my permission to take the key of the hall door to his room every night.

There was a certain manner in making this unusual, though simple request, that was meant to elicit my attention and inquiry to the cause, but I asked no question, and merely said I saw no objection to it.

"If I might, without offence, Sir," said Thomas, "say a few words to you, I should be glad."

I answered, "Yes, certainly;" although there was nothing I more wished to avoid at that moment than any representation relative to Figgins, which I fully anticipated would be the subject on which Thomas proposed speaking.

"Not wishing, Sir, to draw blame on, or to injure a fellow-servant, I have never told you that a continued correspondence has been kept up between Miss Herbert's nurse and Figgins, ever since you left Nice. Indeed, before you left it, so great an intimacy subsisted between them, that when he went to Wales he wrote to her from thence. She wrote to him from Palermo, from Sorrento, and from Malta, Sir, the very day after you arrived here. I always noticed that he came to wherever you were, as soon as he could hear from her: and there was such a mystery made about the letters, and such a desire to conceal from me that any were passing between them, that had not accident made me acquainted with the fact, I should not have known it. Nurse used to give her letters to him to the Faquino to put in the post, charging him especially not to let me see them; and the man, thinking it was only a bit of fun, or some courting going on, used to let me see the address. Thinking Figgins a bad fellow, who would deceive and make a fool of her, for she is quite a simpleton, I spoke to her and advised her not to keep up any more correspondence with him; but she said he would soon become a rich man, and had promised to marry her, and make a lady of her soon, provided she always wrote to him from whatever place she went to. I thought it my duty, Sir, to tell you this, for it would be a pity to have the poor simpleton of a woman led astray by this fellow, and this is one (and he laid a peculiar stress on the word one) of the reasons why I am so sorry he has been hired."

So now the mystery of how Figgins was kept aware of my movements, whatever pains I took to conceal them, was disclosed. And how cunningly the rascal had suborned this weak and silly girl to give him the information he required!

I listened with perfect astonishment to the

statement of Thomas, wondering how I had been so stupid as not to have hitherto suspected the channel through which Figgins became aware of my movements: but it was too simple, too natural to be divined. His boast of having everywhere emissaries who would reveal my residence to him, wherever I might direct my course, was too imposing not to have been credited by me, who, in my terror of this miscreant, had invested him with a sort of melodramatic power and effect, that greatly served his purpose of working on my fears. I was shocked as well as surprised at the revelation of Thomas, but assuming as calm an aspect and manner, as I could, I merely said, "I wish, Thomas, you had told me all this before; I should then have been on my guard, and would certainly not have hired this man; as it is, I cannot discharge him merely because he has been corresponding with the nurse, although it will be well to prevent their associating while they continue in the same house."

"That will, I fear, be difficult, Sir, for the foolish woman is much attached to Figgins, or Howard, as he used to call himself while he was away, for he changed his name for a fortune, as nurse said; but this change of name, coupled with the rest of his conduct and habits, looks very suspicious in my mind."

When Thomas withdrew, I sank into a chair, confounded at the discovery of the manner in which I had been duped by Figgins, and his tool, the nurse. How little had I dreamt, while I was puzzling my brains to plan my escape from him, that I carried with me an agent of his, who would defeat all my schemes! How stupid, how foolish did I now appear in my own eyes! I felt humiliated, and more angry than ever with myself; but what availed my anger? I could not change a single one of the annoyances of my position, and nothing was left but to bear it as best I could. Nothing adds more to self-reproach (always a painful thing to bear) than the perfect consciousness that the evils we are undergoing have been entailed by our own folly. This aggravation to mine had long existed, but this last discovery greatly increased it. I now perfectly remembered Thomas having told me at Nice that Figgins had been questioning the nurse very frequently and closely relative to me, my abode, and other particulars; and yet this information, which ought to have placed me on my guard, and taught me the probability that he might turn this weak woman to account, in discovering my whereabouts, had never once entered my thoughts. What so natural as that, finding this tool ready to his hand, he should employ her; so that while I, believing I was taking effectual means to defeat any search he might make for me, fancied myself securely hidden in the labyrinth I had formed, his agent, mocking all my schemes, could send him a clue to defeat them!

When the house was at rest, the stealthy tread of Figgins announced his approach to my room. Every creak of the stairs as he ascended alarmed me, lest Thomas too should overhear it; and when he entered the chamber, I arose and locked the door to preclude interruption.

"I wished to tell you what passed between

Motcombe, Bradstock, and myself," said Figgins, "but as it's rather a long story, I suppose you'll not object to my sitting down;" and he dropped into an easy chair, *vis-à-vis* to mine. How I longed to punish him for this liberty, but I dared not provoke him. "I took care," said he, "to let those two infamous rogues be present when I noticed the paper posted up, requiring an English servant. 'Hullo!' observed I, 'this seems to be something to suit me: hang me if I don't go and offer myself.'"

"And who'll give you a character, I should like to know?" said Motcombe.

"Yes, yes, my boy," puts in Bradstock, "who'll say any good of you?"

"That's my affair," says I.

"Now come, Figgins, make an end of all this mystery and fool's play. What's the good of it? We are too deep to be done by you—your scheme of entering service again can't take up in;—you think that when you are in a place we'll go away, and you'll be rid of us, but it's no such thing. We'll stick to you like leeches, get your neck into a scrape, as sure as you're alive; whereas, if you go share and share alike with us in the booty you have made, or may make, we'll lead a jovial life, and keep each other's secrets."

"I tried all I could to persuade them that there were no secrets in the case; that the money I had spent so freely with them, came from a relation who died; that it was now all gone; and that I had no resource to make a living but by going to service. They wouldn't believe me, do all I could, and swore they'd never stop until they found out the truth. I pretended there was nothing to find out, and I came off here to offer for the situation. When I went back I met them, and when I told them I was engaged they would hardly believe it. That's one of the disagreeable things among fellows like them, they never believe a word they say to each other. When at last they found I was coming here, Bradstock had the impudence to propose to me to let 'em in at night to rob this house. Yes," seeing me look surprised, "hang me if he hadn't?"

"The packet will sail in two days," said Motcombe, "and the night before you can open the door to us, or hand out whatever valuables there are in the house, and we'll be off early in the morning, and no one will find us out; nor will you get into a scrape, for we can cut through the lock of the door from the outside without much noise, which will bear you harmless, for no more suspicion can fall on you than on any other servant in the house."

"I told them I never would turn a robber; and then they twitted me because of a great past scrape I had the misfortune to fall into; and said, 'in for a penny, in for a pound. I was already enough in their power to ruin me, and it was no use holding back now.'"

"The truth is, I am in their power, that's the long and short of it, and heavily have they made me pay for it; but I'm so tired of being bullied and plundered, that I'd almost rather give myself up to justice, than drag on life in their clutches. I know they're no better than myself, and I believe, on the contrary, they are much worse; but, if



I was to try to show them up to the law, they'd swear away my life. They're two to one, and hold by each other against me."

I experienced a loathing sense of degradation as I listened to Figgins's acknowledgment of his own turpitude. I felt that an inferior, a menial, must have indeed formed the very lowest estimate of the character of his employer, before he could thus venture to lay bare his guilt to him. To do so, was a tacit avowal of equality between them, a sort of mode of showing that it was taken for granted, that both were embarked in the same boat. Pride is one of the last qualities that forsakes him who has long indulged it; and serves as the medium by which his punishment for sin is most frequently inflicted. I had passed through humiliations enough, Heaven knows, to have crushed mine, yet it still survived in my breast, as the pangs I endured whenever it was assailed but too well proved.

"I have now told you the whole truth," said Figgins, "and have prepared you for whatever these villains may write against me. They'll do all they can to hurt me, I know, but I'll keep out of their way, and remain within doors till I can find out if they're gone from Malta. In the meanwhile, keep the windows well bolted, and the door secure, at night, for fear of accidents, and fire-arms loaded will do no harm."

I dismissed him for the night, ashamed of the interview.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

THE following day Thomas informed me, that he had been grossly insulted by Figgins, because he had told that individual that he must not go into the nursery, and had informed the nurse that she must not sit in the room assigned to the men-servants.

"You'll find, sir," said Thomas, "that it won't do to keep this man. He has a violent and ungovernable temper, and is by no means disposed to submit to the regulations of a steady family. I was sure it would be so, and am sorry to find I was right. The two fellows he used to walk with, are continually hovering about this house since he came into it, and they are such suspicious-looking persons, that I cannot help thinking they mean no good. I must, however, say, Figgins shows no desire to see them, for he hasn't been once out since he entered your service, and he requested me, in case they should call to inquire for him, to say he was out, or was not to be seen. Judging from his manner, sir, I should say he was afraid of them."

"That argues in his favor," observed I, "he has probably discovered that they are worthless, and wishes to keep up no further intercourse with them."

"I'm afraid, sir, there's not much to choose between them. But, at all events, I hope you will give your own instructions to nurse and to Figgins, relative to their keeping apart."

"Should they infringe your orders, Thomas, I certainly will."

The remainder of the day passed over quietly. I heard no more complaints. I sat up later than usual that night reading, and was about to retire to my bed-room, when I heard a noise at one of the windows on the ground-floor. I listened attentively, and became certain that some person or persons were endeavoring to force open the window; but they were so cautious in their efforts, that every five or six minutes they discontinued them, lest the noise should be remarked. The warning given me by Figgins of the intention of Motcombe and Bradstock to rob my house, now flashed across my mind. This warning proved his good faith to me, at least. I hesitated for a few minutes what I had best do, and then seizing a poker in my hand, the only weapon within my reach, having no arms, I descended to Thomas's sleeping-room, and awoke him, though not without some difficulty. Indeed his snoring, which was so loud as to be audible at a considerable distance, had been, I conclude, heard through the window, and had encouraged these miscreants to attempt to force it, believing that the noise they made would be lost in his.

While I was yet shaking Thomas's shoulder to arouse him, I heard Figgins leave his room, and, in another moment he stood before me. He looked significantly at me, and exclaimed, "There are robbers trying to force the window; I have got pistols," and he pointed to a case in his hand—"I hope you have arms, sir."

"No, none," replied I.

"Hush, make no noise," resumed Figgins, "my advice is, that we keep perfectly quiet; let them force the window, and I will shoot them one after another as they enter."

Never shall I forget the demoniacal expression of Figgins's countenance as he spoke. The triumph of a ferocious hatred and vengeance flashed in his malignant eyes, such as may be seen in the face of some fierce animal about to pounce on its prey.

"No no," replied I, "I want no blood shed; I wish to guard my property, but not to wound or kill the robbers."

"What! would you spare 'em—spare such villains as these, who wouldn't mind a pin killing us all?" said Figgins, forgetting in the excitement of his hatred and thirst for blood, that he was betraying, before Thomas, his knowledge of the robbers.

This oversight on his part did not pass unnoticed, for Thomas looked sharply at him, and remarked, "Oh! you know the robbers, do you?"

Before he could reply, I cried out, "Who's there? We're armed; and your blood be on your own heads if you compel us to fire."

We instantly heard footsteps rapidly retreating from the window. Figgins, frantic with rage and disappointment, rushed to the hall-door to open it, but the key not being there, his anger knew no bounds. He uttered oaths and execrations at not being able to get out and pursue the robbers, cursing his luck at missing such a chance of destroying them.

"That fellow 'is a wild beast rather than a man," said Thomas, *sotto voce*, shuddering as he

looked at me; "I am sure he would rather kill a man than not."

"Who took the key away?" demanded Figgins. "Had it been in the lock, I would have pursued the villains, and brought them down."

"I took the key," replied Thomas.

"What, did you take me to be a thief?" said he, angrily.

"I make it a point always to take the key at night," observed Thomas, calmly.

"Let the police be informed in the morning, Thomas, of this attempt," said I; "and inquiries be made to detect those who made it."

"And if they should be discovered, Sir, I hope you will prosecute them to the utmost extremity of the law," observed Figgins. "But it was a sin, aye, and a shame too, to have let them off, when I could have shot them as easily as rats are shot when running into a trap."

We all retired to our beds again. The dislike of Thomas to Figgins increased tenfold by the discovery of his warm desire to shoot the robbers; while I could perceive that Figgins, on his side, had conceived a strong aversion to Thomas, from the circumstance of his having taken out the key of the hall-door.

For me, a vague dread of danger to come was more predominant in my mind than gratitude for that recently escaped. Men so desperate as the late companions of Figgins, were not likely to remain inactive; and that they would draw trouble on me, I felt a strong presentiment, although the precise manner by which they might accomplish it I could not divine.

The next morning Thomas went to lay information before the police; who, after taking down his report, sent persons to examine the window, and note down the state in which it had been left. It was found by the marks that the tools used in the attempt must have been those generally employed by burglars. This circumstance the police thought might lead to the discovery of the perpetrators of the offence; and a diligent search was set on foot for their detection.

While Thomas was absent on this errand, Figgins stole to my chamber.

"I told you, Sir," said he, "that these villains proposed to me to rob the house. I know what they are capable of. Oh! why did you prevent me from shooting them? I could so easily have done it, and had the law on my side too. 'Twas folly, 'twas downright madness to have stopped me. Once rid of those two villains, I should have been at rest, and in peace for the rest of my life; and you, too, would have found the benefit, for then I should not be compelled to come and fix myself on you, which I am sure must be disagreeable to you, and is anything but pleasant to me. I hope, however, they are both off by the packet that was to sail this morning; but what security have we that they mayn't come back, when the attempt to break into this house blows over?"

"If they have gone," said I, "your best plan would be to take the opportunity of their absence to leave Malta, and go to some place where they cannot find you out. I will furnish you with means to depart, and regularly send you a yearly stipend of fifty pounds a year, wherever you go to."

"Ah, you don't know them!" replied he, "if you did, you wouldn't reckon so confidently on my escaping from their clutches. No, my only chance was their death, and you have made me lose that," and he shook his head, and looked bitterly at me. "They are, as I said before, two against one, when I'm alone. While I stick to you, we are two and two, and it will go hard against us if we don't prove a match for 'em."

Angered by his familiarity, with some portion of my old *fiercé*; I drew up, and desired that he would not presume to include me in any league, offensive or defensive, against the two bad men in question.

"Don't drive me raving mad!" exclaimed he. "What's the use of this false pride with me when we're here alone together! Are we not in the same boat, and exposed to the same danger? and should we not combine our efforts to balk whatever schemes these villains may form against us?"

"I have nothing to do with these men, and they can have nothing against me; why, therefore, should I fear them?"

"You may yet find to your cost that you are mistaken," observed Figgins. "Your safety depends on me—that you must know as well as I do. Now, unfortunately, I am in *their* power, as you are in *mine*, and if they were to take any steps against me, and I was brought into a scrape, I cannot answer for your secret not being exposed. Let us understand each other, once for all; while I am safe you shall be so. The whole thing hinges on this."

A knock at the door announced the return of Thomas, and putting his hand to his lip, in token of silence, Figgins hurried from the room to admit him.

"The first person I met in the street, Sir," said Thomas, "was one of the suspicious looking fellows I used to see walking about with Figgins. He appeared quite unconcerned, and swaggered by me as if nothing had happened, and yet I can't help thinking he and his friend were the very men who forced the window; for if you noticed, Sir, Figgins let out that he suspected *who* the robbers were; and what makes me think all the worse of him, he seemed most anxious to shoot 'em in cold blood, which, considering they were so lately his constant friends and companions, looks very strange. The police have all set to work to discover the burglars, and I hope will find 'em out."

It was clear that Thomas entertained the worst opinion of Figgins, and what was infinitely more embarrassing to me, took no pains whatever to conceal his opinion from me. Indeed, he seemed actuated by a desire to disclose his sentiments on this subject, in order to prepare me for some anticipated mischief. How strange, then, must it appear in his eyes, that I should still continue to retain a man of whom he had formed such suspicions! I felt ashamed to meet his eye, and yet could not bring myself to rebuke him for his evil thoughts of Figgins, although every indication and expression of them was a reproach to me. How had I lost the respect of my servant; and, alas, forfeited my own!

I walked out after breakfast, and encountered only one of Figgins's late companions. He

eyed me narrowly, and walked on in the direction of my house, while I proceeded in a different one. Where could his associate be? Had he left Malta, and wherefore? I found myself thinking a good deal of these bad men, and wondering what they were going to do; and when, conscious of my vague anxiety about them, I endeavored to reason myself into the belief that they, or their actions, could be nothing to me, a presentiment of evil to come through them could not be conquered, and an undefinable alarm connected with them haunted me. Here was I, meeting at every step Englishmen, from whom, although personally unknown to me, I might have claimed assistance to defeat any conspiracy formed, or forming against me, were I not in the power of Figgins. But I trembled at the bare notion of his being confronted with any one, however determined he might be to guard my secret. There was something in his appearance and manner well calculated to impress persons with an unfavorable opinion of him, and create surprise, if not suspicion, that I should retain such a servant. I felt, that by one act of folly, of madness, in yielding to his threats, I had placed myself out of the pale of sympathy with the worthy portion of my fellow-men, and that I must continue to drag on life, a prey to perpetual anxiety and terror.

When I returned home, Thomas, on admitting me, related that one of Figgins's late associates had, soon after my departure, knocked at the door, and inquired to see the servant who had entered the establishment a few days before. "As Figgins had requested me to say he was out when any one wanted to see him," said Thomas, "I told his friend he was not within."

"I know *he is within*," replied he, "and I am determined to see him."

"I have told you he is not," repeated I, "so it's no use your keeping me from my work."

"Tell him that he'll find himself mistaken, if he thinks that he can shake off, or conceal himself from *old friends*," answered he; "and be sure to add, that the most dangerous *enemies* are made out of old friends, when people try to get away from 'em."

"There was something so malicious and spiteful in this man's look and manner, that I just thought I'd bring down his impudence a little," observed Thomas; "so I said,—'The new servant is out with the police, looking for the robbers who tried to get into this house last night,' and I fixed my eyes on his face while I spoke. I assure you, Sir, he turned as red as fire when I said the words; but he tried hard to look unconcerned."

"Oh! he is, is he?" said he, "Give him my compliments, then, and tell him I'm glad he remembers the old proverb, 'Set a thief to catch a thief.'" He was then walking off, but he returned and said, "Pray what's the new servant's name?"

"Why, as you're his friend, you surely must know," answered I. He looked vexed, but gave a sneer, and said:—

"When a man goes by more names than one, his friends don't always know by which to inquire for him; but tell the new servant, *whether he is now Mr. Figgins or Mr. Howard*, that

Mr. Motcombe is on the look out for him,' and away he went."

"Figgins had been listening to all that passed, hid behind the door of the waiting-room, off the hall; and when the door was closed, he came forth, Sir, as pale as a ghost, and absolutely trembling, 'What are you so afraid of?' asked I."

"'Afraid,' repeated he, his lips shaking, 'I am not afraid, I'm only surprised at the rascal's impudence.'"

"And ever since, Sir, he seems all over in a twitter, quite cast down like, though he tries all he can to hide it. He asked me to let him have a glass of brandy, and when I refused, he gave money to the kitchen woman to go off to the next shop to bring him some. Now, Sir, I've told you all that passed, that I should not be blamed if anything happens; but it seems to me to be very dangerous to have a man in the house who has such persons coming after him, and threatening him. They must know something very bad against him."

## CHAPTER XLVII.

TOWARDS the evening of the day of Motcombe's visit to Figgins, I was disturbed by clamor and the sound of quarrelling in the servants' offices, a very unusual circumstance in my house, for Thomas, aware of my nervous temperament, and abhorrence of noise, always took especial care to maintain quietness among the servants. It instantly occurred to me that Figgins must be the cause of this tumult, and consequently I did not ring the bell to inquire; but the clamor increased, and at length Thomas rushed up stairs, and, in great agitation, entered my room.

"I have been struck by that drunken sot, Figgins, Sir," said he, "who has been drinking spirits ever since the visit of Motcombe this morning, and is now so intoxicated, that when I tried to prevent his going to the nursery, he struck me, and tore my clothes, as you see. I intend going for the police, to take him away, for it is impossible to submit to such usage."

I felt the blood rush to my face; but, conscious of all the mischief that might occur if Thomas put his threat into execution, I observed that it would be better to let him sleep off his inebriety, and that I was sure he would be sorry for his bad behavior when he came to his senses. While I was yet speaking, I heard him staggering up the stairs, and in another moment he came into the room, his face bloated and crimson, and his eyes flashing with anger. Never had I beheld a more revolting object.

"I say," exclaimed he, addressing me, "will you allow this blockhead to insult me, and dictate where I am, or am *not*, to go?"

"Leave the room at present," said I, "and go to bed; to-morrow I will hear what you have to say."

"To-morrow!" reiterated he. "That's a good un, howsomdever. You will hear what I have got to say now; and, what's more, *you shall too*. Come, come, don't think to frighten me with

your grave looks. You know well enough that if I choose to speak, you'd soon be glad to cry *peccavi*; and, what's more, if you don't at once turn this here impudent rascal out of doors, I *will* speak out. I'm not going to be bullied and browbeat by a fellow like this. I'm not to go and see the nurse when I like!—I'm not to smoke, forsooth, because you dislike the smell of tobacco!—I'm not to get drunk when I like!—in short, I'm to be a slave, and under the orders of this here numskull, when I ought to be treated as well as yourself, seeing as how I have you wholly in my power, as you well know."

"Had I not better go at once for the police, Sir?" said Thomas, looking perfectly thunder-struck.

"No," replied I; and approaching Figgins, I made a strong effort to *appear* calm,—to be *really* so was beyond my utmost effort. I spoke to him: "Let me advise you to go to bed; to-morrow you will regret having behaved ill. Do, Figgins, retire to your room."

"Not until you have turned this rascal out of the house, and made me upper servant to rule over all the others. It isn't much to ask, when I might command you; yes, *you*," and he stared provokingly in my face. "When I might show you that, for all you pretend to be *my* master, I am *yours*."

The astonishment of Thomas, at hearing all this, could only be equalled by the mingled emotions of rage, shame, and indignation which filled my breast. I absolutely trembled from the violence of my feelings, although I did all in my power to prevent this symptom of agitation from being seen.

"You had better sit down," said Figgins, "for you're in such a taking you can hardly stand, and I'll set you the example." And he sank into the most comfortable chair in the room.

"I can't remain and see you insulted in this manner, Sir," observed Thomas; "and if you will not allow me to go for the police to take this man away, or to turn him out myself, I really must leave the house."

"Leave the house! Why, that's just what I want, what I've been driving at," exclaimed Figgins. "So, go along; and never let me see your face here again as long as you live."

"Do not leave the house, Thomas," said I. "You see this man is so much intoxicated that he knows not what he says or does."

"What, do you ask the rascal to stay before my face, after I have told him to go?" demanded Figgins, furious with passion; and rising from his seat, he approached me in a menacing attitude.

"If you dare to lift your hand against my master," exclaimed Thomas, placing himself between the ruffian and me, "I will throw you out of the window."

Figgins aimed a blow at him, but in the exertion lost his balance, and fell on the floor, striking his head so violently against the table that the blood rushed from the wound, flowing over the carpet. He turned so very pale, that for a few minutes I really believed he was either dead or dying. He was totally insensible too; and Thomas also imagined that all was over with him.

Shall I confess the truth; shall I expose the turpitude of my own hardened heart, and acknowledge that a gleam of joy passed through it, when I believed I was for ever released from the power of the wretch who had so lately insulted—tortured me; and who held my honor—my very life, in thrall? To be rid of him without sin or crime, without having even willed his death, was as if the weight of a mountain had been removed from my breast! But better feelings came. That he should rush before his offended God in a state of brutal inebriation, with all his sins on his head, was so shocking, that I busied myself in using every effort to restore him to life as strenuously as if his existence were desirable to me.

"Oh, Sir!" said Thomas, "he is not worthy of this care. You could do no more by a good man than by this wretch."

"Humanity, Thomas, has its laws, and they must not be violated. The more unworthy is this unfortunate man, the less fit is he to die, and the more is it my duty to save him if possible."

"I hope, Sir, you may never have cause to repent this humanity," observed Thomas; "but I fear this wretch will be a torment to you as long as he lives. Forgive me, Sir, for presuming to forget the difference between us, and for speaking to you so freely. I know not how, nor why, this man dares to threaten you; and behave as if you were in his power; but that he does so is quite clear; and that you, Sir, permit it, I grieve to say, is equally so. I cannot stay in the same house with him, to be a witness to all this. I could not,—indeed, Sir, I could not,"—and tears started into his eyes,—"stand it. Oh, Sir, how sorry I am to see you so ill-treated!" and he put his handkerchief to his eyes, and positively wept.

While he was speaking, I was occupied in binding the head of Figgins with my handkerchief, and in forcing a little cold water into his mouth.

"Do go for a surgeon, Thomas," said I, "and let us try to save this unhappy man."

"But if, when he comes to himself again, Sir, he should insult you before the surgeon, which he is quite capable of doing, if only speech is granted him?"

"No; the loss of blood will have brought him to his senses, and he will say nothing offensive."

"Well, Sir, your orders shall be obeyed; but for God's sake, Sir, and for your own, and your child's sake, get rid of this man; for, be assured, he will bring disgrace on you and your house, and set all your servants talking disrespectfully of you; and no honest man will remain in your service, while he is in it."

So saying, Thomas left the room, and hurried off in search of a surgeon, while I bathed the forehead of Figgins with cold water, and endeavored to restore him to consciousness. At length, he heaved a deep sigh, opened his eyes, and looked at me.

"Where am I?" exclaimed he; and then seeing the blood, which had stained his clothes, he shuddered, and inquired what had occurred to him. "I have been struck, and half murdered," said he; "I see it all now. You wanted to get rid of me, that your secret might be safe."

"Unhappy man," replied I, "your own inten-

perance has been the sole cause of the state in which you find yourself. After insulting me grossly, you wanted to strike Thomas for no just cause, and in aiming a blow at him you lost your equilibrium, and in falling, hit your head against the leg of the table."

"I don't believe a word of it," observed the obtuse wretch. "I'm quite sure you did it, or got that rascal Thomas to strike me, when I could not defend myself; but I'll have my revenge."

At this moment the surgeon arrived with Thomas; and Figgins, with dogged sulkiness, allowed his head to be examined. The wound was found to be deep, and the loss of blood occasioned great weakness. Figgins was removed to his room, where being placed in bed, the surgeon dressed the wound, and offered to send a nurse to attend on his patient.

"He has very narrowly escaped being killed; half an inch more to the right would have been fatal, and as it is, I am not prepared to pronounce that he will recover," said he; "he is evidently a man of intemperate habits, and a wound like this is much more dangerous with such, than with a sober person. I rather suspect a concussion of the brain, from the lethargic appearance of the patient, and the dilation of the pupils of the eyes."

I requested the surgeon to visit Figgins as frequently as he considered it necessary, and he promised to return again in a few hours.

When he had left the house, Thomas said to me, "Pray, Sir, allow me to say a few words to you. This bad man is now reduced to a state that will, in all human probability, detain him in his bed for many weeks. Why should you not take this opportunity of leaving Malta, he being unable to obstruct your departure, or to follow you, for some time at least?"

I felt my face flush at this open avowal, that Thomas was aware that I was in Figgins's power, and that it was desirable I should escape from him. To what a position was I reduced! And how was my pride, that besetting sin of my nature, humbled! I wished to make some attempt to disprove the justice of Thomas's opinion, but I had not nerve enough to do so. I felt that I could not deceive him, that he had drawn unerring conclusions from all that he had seen and heard, and that I could not blind him. Yet the suggestion he had given me of leaving Malta, made such an impression on my mind, that I wondered it had not occurred to me. Yes, this was the time to leave Malta. I remembered with satisfaction that Figgins hardly dared go to England, since there it was that he had committed the crime known to his two companions, Motcombe and Bradstock, and for which an innocent person had been punished.

How strange that it had not previously occurred to me, that my best chance of escape from him would be to go to England! But the truth was, I had for some time almost lost the power of coolly calculating the most advisable step to adopt; and constantly kept in terror by Figgins, I deferred from day to day coming to a decision, which the conduct of this wayward and impracticable man might render abortive.—Yes, Thomas was right, this was the moment to go to England, and I would the next day, by which,

a packet was expected to arrive, give out that it brought me letters requiring my immediate presence at home.

The packet arrived that very evening. I went to the post-office myself, returned to my house, and announced that by a packet which would sail the next day I would leave Malta. I ordered every necessary preparation to be made, and desired the nurse to hold herself in readiness to embark.

To my utter astonishment, however, she declared her intention of not leaving Malta until Figgins was recovered. She stated that she had been affianced to him ever since we were at Nice, and that to leave him under present circumstances was out of the question.

And this woman had been the nurse of my child from her birth, and had been treated with the utmost indulgence and kindness ever since she entered my service. She had always professed to love my daughter fondly, and the little girl was warmly attached to her. Yet she could abandon her charge at such a moment, and for the sake of one of the most worthless and unprincipled men on earth. I sent for her, reasoned, advised, and argued with her, but in vain. Figgins had so completely succeeded in wholly blinding her, alike to her duty and interest, that all argument was useless. The foolish and selfish woman believed that her services could not be dispensed with, and that it being impossible for my daughter to undertake a voyage without a female attendant, I should be compelled to postpone my departure.

Thomas, however, came to my relief in this dilemma. He had some time before heard of an Englishwoman who had lost her mistress, the wife of the colonel of a regiment stationed there, and who desired to find some person returning to England, and requiring her services for the voyage. The widower would give her an excellent character, and she would be ready to embark on a short notice. This seemed the very thing, and I was delighted to be able to dispense with the ungrateful nurse.

Thomas went off to engage this woman, and I wrote to the colonel to obtain her character, which proved perfectly satisfactory. I placed a sum of money at my banker's, to satisfy all demands likely to accrue from the illness of Figgins, and for his maintenance, arranging that the surgeon should continue his attendance while necessary; and I embarked the following morning for England, much pleased at observing that my daughter was quite reconciled to her new servant, and bore her separation from her old one much better than I had anticipated.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

Our voyage was a prosperous one. My daughter bore it well, and before its termination I had ascertained that her new attendant merited the high character I had received of her, so assiduous and unceasing were her attentions to her youthful charge, who, in return, evinced

great fondness for her. My resolution to come to England had been so suddenly adopted, that I had no time to form any plans relative to where I should settle when I arrived there. My first wish was to see Mrs. Neville, in order that my child should have the advantage of her protection—for I already felt that a father, however fondly attached to a daughter, cannot supply the place of a judicious and affectionate female friend. How had I been deceived in the nurse, who I believed to be so entirely devoted to the child, that nothing could induce her to leave her; yet, who deserted her charge for the sake of the worthless Figgins! I pondered over the future during the voyage, but it was for my daughter, not for myself, that I formed projects.

Once more I touched the shore of England, but the joy felt by others on returning to their native land was not experienced by me. I returned to it even more gloomy, more hopeless, than when I left it; for then my beloved, my ever lamented Louisa was in life, and although in very delicate health I hoped that a milder climate might restore her, and prolong her existence for many years to come, to bless and comfort me—I came back without her, leaving her dear remains in a foreign grave. I again gazed on the shore we had both watched from the deck, as it receded from our sight, but I now looked on it *alone*, no fond arm pressed mine as then, no sweet voice whispered that "with me all countries would be welcome to her." How well I remembered even the slightest incidents of that brief voyage, and what a flood of tenderness rushed through my heart as they were recalled!

I took my daughter by the hand, and was leaving the Point at Portsmouth to proceed to the inn, when my name was called aloud. A few minutes previously I had been moodily reflecting on my isolated state. It then appeared a cause for additional gloom that no friendly voice would hail me, no amicable hand be stretched forth to clasp mine as I once more touched my native land. Yet now that I heard my name pronounced, the sound of recognition, far from giving me pleasure, grated harshly on my ear, and could I have avoided meeting the individual who uttered it, though ignorant who it might be, I would have done so.

"Mr. Herbert, my dear Mr. Herbert, how glad I am to see you!" said the voice, and in a moment after I felt my hand grasped by that of Mrs. Scuddamore, who, more robust and rubicund than ever, uttered a torrent of congratulations on my return to England, of expressions of pleasure at being at the spot to welcome me, and of condolements at the severe loss I had experienced.

"I read the melancholy event in the newspapers," continued she. "I was quite prepared for it, for poor Mrs. Herbert looked the picture of ill health; and when a woman has a bad constitution, what can be expected? The longer she lived, the more you would have suffered, for let me tell you that few things in life are more trying than to watch a candle a long time going out, for such is the illness of a consumptive woman."

Oh! how I loathed this unfeeling creature!

"But let me not detain you. Let us walk to

the inn. We positively must dine together, and talk over old times. I am at the George."

"I am going to the Crown," said I, anxious to avoid her.

"Not a single room to be had in it," observed she. "I tried to get lodged there, but the house is full, so you can't help yourself. I arrived at Portsmouth last night to meet an old brother officer whom I expected from Malta—Major McCulloch; an excellent soldier—a *lectle* bit of a martinet, *entre nous*, but that's a fault on the right side. He's coming over on leave, to take possession of a little fortune left him in Scotland by a distant relative. He also expects a step in his promotion. I can't understand what has prevented his coming in the same packet with you. He wrote to me that he would, if possible, sail by the next that would leave Malta. I was so sure that he would come, that I engaged a room for him at the George, which you can have, and ordered dinner for two, which you can share, and save me expense, without costing you any more than you would otherwise pay."

How I groaned in spirit as I heard her coolly arrange my movements without ever consulting my wishes on the subject.

"I think I will at once proceed to London," said I, anxious to get rid of her.

"What, and expose your little girl, who looks so delicate, to such fatigue on coming off a long voyage?" said she. "It would be perfect madness, my dear Mr. Herbert; nay, more, perfect cruelty. No, no, you must give her, and yourself too, some repose—you positively must."

And now for the first time she looked at my daughter, and with much the same glance with which a drill-sergeant examines a raw recruit, who has just joined his regiment, or a horse-dealer inspects a new purchase.

"A pretty child, upon my word, a very pretty child!" observed she; "but looks very delicate, like her poor mother. Requires care—great care. Asses' milk, the constant use of dumbbells to expand her chest, and some months' drilling under a good soldier, would do her a world of good. I have just a man in my eye for this, an old soldier of my regiment, now a pensioner in Chelsea Hospital. He has got the rheumatism so badly, that he is often months without being able to move; but when he *can* walk, I know no man so good for drilling young people, and setting them up."

All the time she was carrying on this monologue, I was considering how I could escape from her. I knew it would be no easy task, but her society was so insupportable to me, that I was most desirous to get rid of it. She, however, had taken possession of my arm, and relinquished it not until we reached the inn.

I had some difficulty in procuring a chamber for my daughter and her attendant, for the inn was, as Mrs. Scuddamore had represented, nearly full. That lady, always fertile in resources for emergencies, proposed a *shake-down*, as she termed it, for Miss Herbert, in her room, and a stretcher for her maid.

"I have been too long accustomed to rough it in campaigns abroad and at home, to be disposed to make difficulties, and could sleep as well on

three chairs joined together, aye, or even on the ground, as in a regular bed," said the Amazon; much to the surprise, if not the admiration, of the hostess of the inn, who gazed at her with undisguised wonder.

I remained in my own room with my little girl, until summoned to dinner by the waiter. I found Mrs. Scuddamore already seated; and, like an old soldier, as she professed and prided herself to be, examining the wine, and smelling the soup.

"I have my doubts," observed she, "about that soup being made of fresh meat; or, if made of fresh meat, it has certainly been re-heated, a thing I can't bear."

The waiter, more than half offended, declared that such things never occurred in the establishment to which he belonged, and eyed Mrs. Scuddamore with peculiar suspicion during the rest of the repast.

"This is a quality of beef that my dear departed Colonel Scuddamore never would have tolerated. No, he carefully examined the meat furnished for the soldiers' rations, allowed no speculation, no private understanding between the quartermaster and the contractor. 'My soldiers,' he used to say, 'must have the best, and *only* the best meat'; and he made it a point to taste their soup, and other food. Ah! *he* was a model of commanding officers: and if I am better acquainted than other women are with many useful things, I owe it wholly to him."

Dinner over, and the waiter withdrawn, Mrs. Scuddamore, with that absence of feeling and tact which was peculiar to her, inquired into the particulars of my poor wife's illness and death; but I declined entering into them, on the plea that the wounds were too recent to be touched, without a degree of pain that I was unable to encounter.

"Strange!" observed she. "Now, when I lost Colonel Scuddamore, it afforded me the greatest comfort to speak about him. But this, I suppose, originated in my having been so accustomed to see the killed and wounded *en masse*, when I accompanied my husband on foreign service, that I was used to death. Nothing gives courage so much as witnessing such scenes. And now tell me, did you know Major McCulloch at Malta?"

I replied in the negative.

"Then you had a great loss," observed she. "He is a capital soldier, and no wonder, for he served many years under the command of Colonel Scuddamore. I will be confidential with you, Mr. Herbert, the Major will become my husband as soon as he gets his Lieut.-Colonelcy. He proposed for my hand the year after I lost the Colonel; but I told him, that to marry any officer of an inferior grade in the army to that which my former husband bore, was out of the question. He then extorted a promise, that when he received his promotion, I would become his. I wanted to wait till he became a full Colonel, but he said, that as neither of us was young, and both had seen a great deal of hard foreign service, it would be folly to wait for so long a period; so I yielded, though I do think it rather *infra dig.* for me to lose rank by becoming the wife of a Lieut.-Colonel, after having so long

been the wife of a full one. The Major says, 'Where should we find persons to suit either of us so well as each other? We have seen the same countries, been engaged in the same scenes; we both revere the memory of the gallant Colonel Scuddamore. You know *me* to be a brave soldier, and I know you to be the very best soldier's wife I ever met. Our winter evenings will pass rapidly, talking over old times, by our fire-side; and our incomes joined will secure us the comforts of life.' What could be urged against such a rational project? Now, Mr. Herbert, that I have told you my plans, do, pray, let me know yours. You are come home, I conclude, to marry Mrs. Neville, the widow of poor Neville. I heard you had both arranged this affair at Nice, when you lost your wife, and she her husband."

"Then you were greatly misinformed," observed I, red with anger. "Mrs. Neville was in too great affliction for the loss of a husband she fondly loved, to admit of so preposterous, so indelicate, and so indecorous a proceeding; and as for me, I should hate and despise myself, were I capable of such conduct."

"So, then, you are *not* engaged."

"Certainly not; and if I know myself, I never will give a successor to her whose loss I must ever deplore."

"But, my dear Mr. Herbert, you are still a young man. It would be madness at your age to remain single! I have not yet told you, that your old flame, my niece, Mrs. Mordaunt, is become a widow. Yes, positively she is free, and has inherited a very pretty property from her late husband. Poor fellow, you would never, I am sure, guess how he met his death? He was killed in a duel—shot through the breast. I knew him to be so deficient in courage, that when I was told a ball was lodged in his body, I said he must have swallowed it then, for he never would have stood to be fired at. But he did though, for all that, for his wife, who has a little of my notions of honor, insisted on his going out with a gentleman, whose wife had, she said, insulted her; but whom, I really believe, *she* had insulted, for the husband of the other lady challenged Mordaunt, and he wanted to make an apology, as he was always ready to do, and she would not let him. Yes, Mrs. Mordaunt would make you an excellent wife, for her income is good, she is full of gaiety, and never out of spirits. You were once desperately in love with her, and you know the old song,

'On en revient toujours  
A ses premiers amours.'

Though little inclined to mirth, Heaven knows, I could not forbear smiling at the earnestness with which Mrs. Scuddamore recommended me to marry her niece, and the *naïveté* with which she revealed, that to her the unfortunate Mordaunt owed his death.

There was something so ludicrous in such a recommendation, that I could not forbear laughing, but Mrs. Scuddamore saw nothing risible in the affair, and thought her niece had acted perfectly right in compelling her husband to fight, even though his death was the result.

Having exhausted her military intelligence, the fruit of a constant and sedulous perusal of the Army List, Gazette of promotions, exchanges, and obituaries of the last few months, I wished her good night, having given a very vague answer to her proposal of breakfasting together next morning. I arranged to depart for London at a very early hour, and having paid the bill of our dinner and tea, and left a few lines of farewell for her, giving no clue to my address in town, I sought my pillow, leaving instructions to be called at daybreak.

I got away from Portsmouth long before Mrs. Scuddamore was awake, rejoiced to have escaped from so troublesome an acquaintance, and determined to avoid her and her odious niece by every means in my power.

I entered London once more, but under what altered circumstances? I took apartments at Moffat's Hotel, in Brook-street, desiring to be as near Mrs. Neville's house as possible; and having seen my daughter and her attendant installed in their rooms, I hurried off to inquire if Mrs. Neville was in town.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

I FOUND Mrs. Neville at home, and although the first sight of me brought tears to her eyes, by recalling the sad event at Nice to her mind, her reception of me was kind, nay more, cordial. Her daughter was with her, and a more interesting and intelligent looking child I had never seen. Strikingly like my poor friend Neville, I could not look at her without being reminded of him. Though still pale and delicate, Mrs. Neville had recovered a portion of the beauty and attraction which had won my dear lost Louisa's admiration when first they met. Sorrow had given a more serious character to her countenance than it wore when I first beheld her, but all the feminine softness and touching grace peculiar to it, still existed; and whatever she might have lost in brilliancy and vivacity, she had gained in mildness and increased gentleness. One could not gaze on that pale but still lovely face, or that fragile figure, without feeling that long sorrow had wrought the change visible in her, and an increased sympathy, and deeper interest, were excited for her. When she learned that my daughter was at a hotel, she pressed me so cordially to permit her and her attendant to take up their abode with her, that although I hesitated to part from my child, even for a short time, I could not decline.

"You can come and see your little girl as often as you like," said Mrs. Neville; "and as I have generally a few intimate friends and relations who drop in to spend the evenings with me, it will give me pleasure if you join my quiet circle when you have nothing better to do."

Grateful for this kindness, invaluable to one like me, who had no friends or acquaintances to welcome me, gladly did I promise to avail myself of it. Hitherto my eyes had been wholly occupied in looking at Mrs. Neville and her interesting daughter.

As I glanced at the pensive but beautiful face of the beloved friend of my adored wife how many sorrowful thoughts were recalled to my mind! My poor Louisa seemed again to rise up before me; my dear, my only friend, Neville, seemed to live again, so closely associated were these dear lost ones with her who was now present.

Something of this feeling was also experienced by Mrs. Neville, for I saw tears start to her eyes frequently while we conversed, and the tremulous movement of her lips betrayed her emotion. I noticed too that she more than once turned her eyes to the side of the room where I was seated, and when I arose to depart I glanced at the wall. Upon it were suspended two portraits, so strikingly resembling my beloved Louisa and poor Neville, that I could not for several minutes withdraw my gaze from them, though tears almost blinded me.

"I ought to have prepared you for this surprise," said Mrs. Neville, "but I was afraid to trust myself to speak. The faces of both were so deeply engraved on my heart and memory, that I was enabled to make these portraits, which are constantly before my eyes. They were painted *con amore*, and constitute one of my greatest consolations."

It was some time before I could recover my self-possession, so deeply affected was I by these pictures, and my emotion was the truest homage I could offer to her who had produced them.

Mrs. Neville sent her carriage to the hotel for my daughter and her attendant, and I took my leave of her, promising to join her in the evening, and hastened to give instructions to have the wardrobe of my little girl removed to Brook-street, filled with gratitude that she had so kind, so judicious a friend, under whose protection she could be placed.

My next visit was to my old friend Vise, but a brass plate, with another name than his, informed me that he no longer inhabited his old place of abode. I knocked, and was admitted, and in answer to my inquiries, was informed that Vise had been dead some time. Poor fellow! how my neglect and long silence towards him now smote my conscience. He, who had from the first moment of our acquaintance been so invariably kind and friendly, and had taken such a warm interest in my affairs. I knew not until this moment how much I liked poor Vise, and now, it was too late to prove to him that I was not ungrateful. He must have died thinking me so, and this reflection pained me.

"Should you wish to see his executors, the address can be given you," said the person who had answered my inquiries. "It has been left here in case it should be asked for."

I took the address, and hurried from the house, where no longer, as heretofore, I had a friend.

I walked to Mr. Goldie's, one of the executors of poor Vise. I found him at home, and on sending in my card, I was admitted to his office.

"I have heard my poor deceased friend often speak of you, Sir," said he, looking at me through his spectacles. "He was snatched away very suddenly, and in the prime of life I may say. Not above four or five years older than I am." The speaker looked to be at least twelve years the senior of my poor friend.



"Of all tenures, Sir, and as a lawyer I am conversant on such matters, none are so precarious as that of life. There are so many flaws in the title, Sir, so many clauses of forfeiture, that no man can count on a peaceable or long possession."

The air of self-complacency with which Mr. Goldey uttered these truisms, might have amused me under other circumstances, but now that I was saddened by the loss of poor Vise, I was more disposed to be impatient than diverted by his pompously uttered common-places.

"Death, Sir," resumed he, "is of all creditors the most stern and unbending. He claims, aye, and compels, too, payment of the debts due to him, even from those who never discharged any other. Not that our late respected friend Vise was one of those who neglect their worldly affairs, for there was no man more just in his dealings, or more punctual in the payment of his debts. Never was sued in his life, until the King of Terror, as poets term him, brought his action, without serving him with due notice, got a verdict against him and carried him off.—Poor Vise did not, however, forget his old friends. He has remembered you, Sir, handsomely in his will, which has been properly administered to; and when your identity is satisfactorily proved, you can receive your legacy, amounting to no less a sum than five thousand pounds, as well as different articles belonging to you confided to his trust, each and all of which he took especial care should be labelled, and a regular list of them made out, in order to prevent the possibility of mistake or litigation."

I inquired the particulars of my poor friend's illness, and the precise time of his death.

"The doctors differed, as they generally do, as to his disease. One asserted it was of the liver; another said it was dyspepsia; a third declared it was ossification of the heart; and the fourth insisted that it was an affection of the lungs. The only point on which all agreed, was,—that each had applied precisely the wrong treatment,—so poor Vise's friends had the annoyance, in addition to their regret, of thinking that he might have been saved, had he been differently treated. If a poor unfortunate patient is in danger with one doctor, I leave you to imagine, Sir, how little must his chance be with four. From the beginning, I saw it was all up with him, and the result but too well justified my fears. Death, at all times a disagreeable thing, becomes much more so when it carries off our contemporaries; and though poor Vise was five years, at least, older than me, nevertheless I might, in some sort, consider him a contemporary; and his death alarmed me considerably. Such events come as warnings to us, Sir; and never do I lose a friend, or does a misfortune occur to one, without my thinking that it *might* have happened to myself; and the satisfaction experienced that it has *not*, greatly mitigates the regret felt for others. Indeed, a sensible man may reconcile his feelings to every affliction that befalls *others*, by reflecting that such might be his own lot; and his escape soothes all sorrow."

I left this selfish being, thoroughly disgusted with him, while he, I verily believe, imagined that he had exhibited a degree of good sense and

philosophy, that must have made a most favorable impression on my mind.

When walking back to my hotel, the crowds in the streets, the hurrying to and fro, the noise, the bustle, the air of deep occupation of all those I encountered, struck me with as much surprise as if I had never previously beheld this scene. How different from the comparatively deserted streets of the continental towns, in which life and its business seemed to stagnate!

"Here," thought I, "a man might long escape being found," and the thought of Figgins pursuing me flashed through my mind. "Here an obscure individual, of more than suspected character, would long pause before he dared to prefer an unsupported charge of criminality against a person known to be of respectable station in society." And a feeling of security nerved my frame, long unknown to it. I fancied that in busy, crowded London, with its active police ever within call, my tormentor would be afraid to assail me. That a charge of conspiracy might enable me to get rid of him, should he presume to follow and attack me, and, let me also add, a consciousness that my pecuniary independence would greatly befriend me against any charge brought by an impoverished man of his class, added to my newly acquired courage.—Figgins in London and on the continent were two different persons. In a foreign land he stood a better chance of frightening me to his wishes, because there I had less protection against his nefarious schemes than at home. And as these thoughts passed through my mind, it occurred to me that I ought to go to my property in Wales, and take steps to guard against any future attempt on his part to bring testimony of the crime of which he supposed me to be guilty.

Yes, painful as the effort would be, I would go to Wales, to that spot where, notwithstanding the one terrible event that had obscured the sunshine of my life, I had enjoyed some hours of as exquisite happiness as was ever vouchsafed to mortal! But now, *she* who had bestowed this bliss was sleeping in her distant grave; and I must enter the abode once graced by her presence, every room in which must remind me of her—must make me feel more poignantly the loss of that happiness I must never more hope to find. How impressionable is the human mind! How many thoughts had passed through mine during the few hours that had elapsed since my arrival in London! They had been so various and exciting, that days, nay, weeks, seemed to have glided away, instead of hours, since I left my hotel; and, morally and physically fatigued, I threw myself into a chair, and closed my eyes, as if to shut out thought.

I was aroused from my reverie by the announcement that my solitary dinner was served; and having slightly partaken of it, I dressed for my evening visit to Mrs. Neville, and proceeded to her house.

She had considerably given instructions that I should be shown to the sitting-room assigned to her daughter's use, where I found my sweet Frances waiting, with her attendant, to receive me. The dear child rushed into my arms, and fondly embracing me, exclaimed, "Oh! dear, good papa, how kind of you to let me come here,

where I am so happy with dear Matilda Neville to play with; and her mamma, who is so fond of me. Won't you leave me with them, dear papa, and come and see me every day?"

I felt a chill strike at my heart at this artless address of my daughter's. Was this, then, the reward of that doting affection I had lavished on her, for the pang it had cost me to part from her, for even a short time? Already was her new playmate preferred to me; and her first words to me on meeting, were to prefer a request to be left with her new friends! Stunned and pained, I disengaged myself gently from her embrace. I felt disappointed, grieved—here, where I had garnered up all my affection, all my hopes, I was doomed to find only disappointment, and I mentally accused my child of ingratitude and selfishness, when the unsophisticated little creature was only following the dictates of nature in revealing the pleasure she experienced at finding herself, for the first time, with a playmate of her own age, to enjoy her sports. It was I who was selfish and unreasonable; but so I ever was, allowing my morbid feelings to govern me.

After passing an hour with my daughter,—an hour that, instead of being one of pure pleasure, was poisoned by the thought of her preferring her new friends to me, I joined Mrs. Neville's circle in the drawing-room. It was composed, for the greater part, of near relatives, and a few intimate friends, to whom I was presented. The conversation proved that the visitors were intellectual and accomplished; yet it was wholly free from the pretension and desire to shine, which but too frequently impair, if not destroy, the agreeability of such society. Mrs. Neville formed the focus around which this circle moved, and though no longer playful, animated, and brilliant, as when I first knew her, the seriousness, if not pensiveness of her manner, free from all moroseness or misanthropy, invested her with a new charm.

I took an opportunity of informing her of my intention of departing for Wales next day, and she so earnestly requested me to leave my daughter with her, that I consented.

## CHAPTER L.

I LEFT London at an early hour in the morning, taking no servant with me; and in the post-chaise which conveyed me on my route, had ample time for reflection. I remembered, now for the first time, that the bequest of my late friend Vise would not only prevent the fortune of my daughter being impaired by the sums I had given, or might yet be called on to give to Figgins, but add considerably to her portion; and, although, heaven knows, never fond of money, this thought pleased me; for aught that could tend to make *her* lot in life a more fortunate one, was regarded by me with an interest, that nothing appertaining exclusively to myself could awaken.—I lived but for my child. The present—the future—were contemplated solely with a reference to her welfare; and if I trembled in an agony of

terror, at the possibility of my name being disgraced by a charge preferred against me by Figgins, it was because *she* bore that name, and that a charge of guilt against me would entail discredit on her.

Knowing my perfect freedom from guilt, my conscience no longer inflicted pain on me. Time and reflection had soothed the torture endured during the first year after the fatal event that had blighted my existence; and when death had snatched my beloved Louisa from me, whose peace would have been inevitably destroyed for ever by the disclosure that I had been, even unintentionally, accessory to her sister's death, I no longer dreaded with such intense horror, the chance of discovery, as when the blow might have crushed her. But then came the thought that my daughter's prospects might be ruined; and again I was a trembling coward, ready to make any sacrifice to preserve the name *she* bore from dishonor.

I reached my now desolate home, at a late hour of the third evening from my departure from London. The post which brought the letter announcing my return, had arrived some hours before, and my humble, faithful friend, Mrs. Burnet, had made some preparations for my reception.—A bright fire, a clean hearth, and lighted candles, took off from the gloom that always pervades a long-deserted abode; but alas! the light only showed me the serious, but lovely face, of my departed wife's sister, which might be mistaken for the portrait of my lost Louisa, so striking was its resemblance to her. It made me shudder; and yet I could not withdraw my eyes from it.

I attempted to taste the light supper prepared by Mrs. Burnet, who pressed me so anxiously to eat a few morsels; but I could not swallow, and it was only after having drunk a glass of wine that I could answer her affectionate inquiries for my daughter, so wholly was I overpowered by the agonizing feelings awakened by the sight of the objects around me. There was my lost Louisa's chair, and the footstool on which I had so often seen her delicate feet resting. Her work-table and tambour-frame were still in the places where she had been wont to use them; one of her favorite volumes, with a rose between the leaves, still lay on a small table near her chair, and a pair of her gloves was beside it. How did I press these mementoes of happier times to my lips, and bathe them in my tears, at the thought that she whose presence had been the only sunshine that had ever cheered my gloomy existence, was now slumbering in her distant grave, between which and me a wide sea rolled. It seemed but a short time since I had left the spot I now found myself in, bearing with me my beautiful, my adored companion, blooming in youth and health, or, if the rose had paled on her fair cheek, it was from her tender solicitude for me. Yet, oh! how much sorrow and agony had I endured since that period—How many days of wretchedness and sleepless nights! Everything around me seemed so exactly like what had been before I left my home, that I could hardly reason myself into the conviction that *she* was gone for ever. There were moments in

which I indulged the illusion that she might have gone to her chamber, and that when the door which led to it opened, she would enter! Then came back the terrible truth, and that I could even for a moment have doubted it, filled me with dread that I must be losing my reason, to have had such hallucinations.

Mrs. Burnet spoke not of my lost wife, although I saw by her mournful countenance that her thoughts were with the dead. I was grateful for this forbearance, for I could not have borne to have talked on the subject that occupied all my thoughts. To turn me from bitter memories, Mrs. Burnet reverted to other topics.

"There was a strange man came here, Sir," said she, "who said he had lived in your service at Nice."

I became all ear, though trembling with emotion, as I listened to this preface.

"I really think he was not right in his head," resumed the good woman, "for he did nothing but ask the strangest questions, and all about one subject, which was whether any lady had ever been thrown down from a precipice in our neighborhood; who had been suspected of the crime, and whether the body was ever found, and where buried? I lost all patience at his minute inquiries, and then he went round to all the neighbors, questioning them. And when he heard how poor Miss Maitland had been so long missing, he seemed quite pleased, which showed he must be crazy to be glad of such a misfortune; and after, when he learned that the corpse had been found in the river, and had been buried in the vault in the church, he seemed quite sorry, and wanted to know whether it had been identified by those who knew the deceased, and whether any marks of violence had been discovered on it.

"I don't know whether I ought to repeat this low man's words to you, Sir," continued Mrs. Burnet; "but would you believe it, Sir, he had the impudence and wickedness to ask, if you, yes, Sir, positively you, had never been suspected of throwing the young lady down the precipice? This made the persons to whom he spoke so angry, that they would hold no further talk with him; and, afterwards, he brought a spade and mattock, and went digging up the ground about the precipice, for several days,—some say, in hopes of finding buried treasure. He, at last, went away, and we have heard no more of him ever since; but I am sure he was mad."

My feelings while Mrs. Burnet related all this tale to me cannot be described. Terror, and horror, predominated! To hear a subject discussed, which I never could even think of without shuddering, tortured me almost beyond the power of endurance; and yet I felt the necessity of concealing, though I could not vanquish, my deep emotion. The effort nearly convulsed me; but Mrs. Burnet was no prying spy to watch whatever demonstrations of grief or agitation I might betray; and any symptoms of such that she might notice, she would naturally attribute to anger and indignation caused by what she had narrated.

"To think, Sir," resumed she, "of a crazy fellow coming here to ask whether you had not

loved, and murdered a young lady, whom I and many others could prove on oath you never saw, till you beheld her in her coffin; for you may remember, Sir, she disappeared the very evening of my dear lady's funeral, when you were very ill in your bed; and many persons, as well as me, could prove you had never, since you returned to find your blessed mother no more, left this house, by day or night, except to attend her interment, until you were called from your sick bed, to join in the search of poor Miss Maitland, the night she was first missed."

It was highly consolatory to me to find that Mrs. Burnet's memory was so accurate in every particular connected with the fatal night that had destroyed my peace. Her evidence, if ever required, would fully acquit me of any charge brought by the vile schemer Figgins; and corroborated as it could be by the neighbors who were cognizant of the facts she detailed, I felt that I had little to dread, even if denounced by the wretch who had taken such advantage of my terror.

I determined that I would once more visit the cavern, and ascertain whether the mortal remains of my poor sister-in-law still rested where I had interred them, or whether the statement of Figgins, that he had removed them, was founded in truth. I assumed as calm an aspect as I could, affected to believe with Mrs. Burnet, that the strange man of whom she spoke must be mad, and then pleading fatigue, retired to my bed-room—that which had been my nuptial chamber!

There stood the toilet-table of my lost Louisa, her dressing-stool, and her easy-chair, with their delicate founced coverings, the mirror with its laced draperies, the snowy pillows with their embroidered trimmings. In short, all that distinguishes the *chambre à coucher* of a woman from that of a man. The very atmosphere of the room was redolent of the mingled perfume of violets and vervaine, her favorite odors, which, contained in *sachets* of her own making, had been carefully preserved in the wardrobes and commodes by Mrs. Burnet, and still sent forth their scents. An Æolian harp, placed in a window of the adjoining dressing-room, occasionally breathed its unearthly sounds, as the night-breeze swept over its chords. How frequently had I listened to its fitful music, when she who placed it there was by my side! Now it seemed to breathe a requiem to her shade, every note thrilling my heart with sadness, until, unmanned, I flung myself into a chair, and lightened my tortured breast by an uncontrollable fit of tears.—I wept long; for the fountain of grief, once opened, could not be soon closed. I experienced a sense of relief from tears, and throwing myself on my couch, slept for some hours. When I awoke, I found that it was only a little after twelve o'clock. I had retired so early to my chamber that I could hardly believe that only so small a portion of the night had passed; and now finding that some hours of darkness might still be counted on, and that all was silent in the house, I arose, and determined on proceeding to the cavern, provided I could find a lantern and spade.

With stealthy step I entered a small room not far distant from my bed-chamber, appropriated for the keeping of all objects not in daily requisition, and there I found the lantern formerly used, and having placed in it one of the candles of my chamber, and locked my room door inside, I opened a window, and stepped noiselessly into the garden; in the tool-house of which I found a spade, as I had expected. I had put some phosphoric matches in my pocket, to strike a light when required; and wrapping myself in my cloak, I took the well-remembered path, and with a quick beating heart, hurried on to the cavern.—Not a human being did I meet,—not a sound, save that of the night birds, met my ear.

I entered the cavern, and lit the lantern with a trembling hand. I stooped down close to the earth, to examine whether any portion of its surface had been disturbed since I last saw it, and almost fell to the ground when I beheld evident traces that it had.

Yes, some one *had* been digging here, and had taken so little pains to restore the former evenness of the surface, that the inequality was very perceptible—"Good God!" thought I, "the story told by Figgins was not untrue!" And yet the spot that had been dug up was not precisely that in which I had placed the corpse. There was still a chance that he had not discovered the body, and this chance nerved my arm to apply the spade more vigorously to the closely bound soil, rendered harder by the amalgamation of earth and sand. Large drops of perspiration fell from my brow on the ground, as I worked through it for nearly two hours, when my spade met a different substance. Oh! how I trembled, and how rapidly did my heart beat!—I loosened the earth, and drew forth a portion of the matting which enveloped the corpse. Beneath it a fragment of the cloak I had wrapped around the dead was revealed, and having thrown out several spades-full of the soil, the form, shrouded in its covering of matting and cloak, met my eyes. I fell on my knees and breathed a prayer of thankfulness to the Almighty, for this little less than miraculous escape of the dead from the prying search of Figgins. He had opened the earth in more than two or three places, within a few feet of that spot which contained what he had sought; but the precise one was so knit together, as to offer strong evidence of never having been disturbed since I had closed it, that I felt assured he had not dug it, while other spots disclosed that they had been disturbed. What was I next to do? I was so fearful of not finding the corpse, that I had not thought of what would be advisable to do with it until now. Although shuddering at the contact, I raised the corpse in my arms, and to my utter amazement found it so incredibly light, that at first it occurred to me that I held only its envelopes, and that the remains had been abstracted. That was a terrible moment! I laid down the light burden on the earth, and trembling with the mingled emotions of anxiety and terror, I rapidly tore off a portion of the matting and cloak, when the interior drapery met my touch, and beneath it a skeleton-like form, to which no substance like flesh

seemed to adhere. I dared not look on what had been the face—that face, whose rare and exquisite beauty had been kept fresh in my memory by the wonderful resemblance which that of my departed wife bore to it, and which still lived in my daughter! And yet it was necessary to ascertain that the remains were those which I had placed there! I held the open lantern close to the shrouded form, and with averted eyes, groped with one hand to remove sufficient of the cloak to reveal some part of the corpse, which I could turn to glance for a moment at, when uncovered, when the candle fell from the lantern, and before I was aware that it had done so, matting and cloak were in a blaze! Terrified, bewildered, I lost all self-control, all reason! I rushed wildly to the opening of the cavern to seek assistance, forgetting that none could be met with there; or, if a human being could be encountered, the discovery of my terrible secret must be the inevitable result.

## CHAPTER LI.

Even on the outside of the cavern I could hear the crackling of the flames, and see the bright reflection illuminating the sides of the rock at the entrance, and casting forth a stream of light to the spot where I stood. I wrung my hands in helpless, hopeless despair. Could the dead feel the fire that encircled it in its embraces, raging more fiercely every moment, I could not have experienced a greater degree of terror and dismay than filled my breast then! The lurid flames streamed forth from the mouth of the cavern, falling on the sand and on the water like columns of molten gold. Oh! what would I not have given for some vessel to fill with water to throw on the fire,—but I was powerless, and could only writhe in agony as the blaze mounted still higher.

Hardly conscious of what I did, I again entered the cavern, and gazed on the flames, when, O! horror! through them, as through a transparent vial, I could behold the face of the dead brightly tinted by their reflection; and uttering a loud cry, I fell to the earth! How long I remained insensible I know not; but when consciousness was restored the fire was over, and the smouldering ashes still smoking, alone revealed what had occurred.

The first light of day-break now pierced the cavern. Oh! how dreary, how desolate was its aspect, as only partially illuminated, the distant portions still remained in deep shadow, while the pale light of day fell on the funeral pyre. Aroused to a sense of danger, I felt that these traces of some mysterious crime must instantly be removed. I collected the ashes of the matting and drapery, which, alas! were mingled with those of the dead, and filling my cloak with them, although my hands recoiled with instinctive horror from the contact, I emptied the contents into the water, and saw them quickly hurried away, and dispersed by the rapidity of the current.

Having then shaken the cloak as carefully as

I could, to remove every particle of the ashes, from it, I placed in it the scorched skull, shorn of the beautiful tresses that had formerly graced that once lovely head, and the half carbonized limbs, that could have betrayed them to have appertained to a human being. I then filled up the now empty grave, and by repeatedly stamping on it, and strewing dust over the surface, restored it to its former appearance.

Having enveloped the head,—the word makes me shudder even now,—and the bones into as small a parcel as I could, I hastily pursued my way to my house, like a criminal, glancing from side to side, lest some shepherd should be leading his flock from the fold, or some early milk-maid should be abroad to milk her cows. Every sound alarmed me, every shadow terrified. The carol of the birds to welcome morning, was, for the first time, distasteful to my ear, by reminding me of the advance of day, and that, consequently others, like myself, might be abroad. My fears, however, were groundless; I met not a human being; and having entered the window by which I had left my house, I placed my sacred burden on a table, and gasping for breath, sank into a chair to recover my self-possession.

Grown more calm, I replaced the lantern where I had found it, took out a portion of the clothes contained in a large trunk I had brought with me, and removing from my cloak the deposit it had enveloped, I wrapped the contents in a large dressing-gown, which I placed in the trunk, taking care to secure the key in a secret drawer in my writing-case. I then removed every trace of soil from my cloak, brushed it, scraped my boots, and carefully washed my hands, emptying the contents of the basin into the garden, and then, unlocking my chamber-door, went to bed. But sleep refused to visit my couch, notwithstanding the intense sense of fatigue I experienced. The thought of the scene I had witnessed, and the recollection of the contents of the trunk in my room, prevented me from having even a few minutes' sleep, greatly as I required it; and when, at eight o'clock, I rang my bell for Mrs. Burnet, my pale face and haggard countenance alarmed the worthy creature so much, that I had some difficulty in preventing her from sending for Dr. Bellinden. Some strong coffee proved a stimulant that so greatly relieved me, that Mrs. Burnet's alarm subsided.

"I was thinking, Sir," said she, "that it was very stupid of me not to have thought of opening your trunk, and arranging its contents in the drawers."

I trembled at the bare notion, but making an effort to conceal my agitation, I answered, "that as my stay would be only for a day, I would not have my trunk unpacked."

Seeing that she glanced at the trunk, whose size must have given her the idea, that for so short a visit it was unnecessary to bring so large a one, I said something about having intended to have stayed some time, but that I found the place reminded me too much of the past, and affected my feelings so powerfully, that I could not support a longer continuance there.

"I don't wonder at it, Sir," replied the worthy

woman; "I thought you looked extremely ill last evening when you arrived; but you appeared so much worse this morning, when I first entered, that I really believe your health would suffer by a longer residence here." And she sighed deeply, and tears filled her eyes while she spoke.

I walked out after breakfast, and called on the good pastor of our hamlet. His reception of me was most kind and affectionate—my altered appearance had evidently touched him, for I saw his eyes become moist more than once while he spoke to me. He expressed a hope that I was come to make some stay, but, when I stated that I had found I had not yet acquired sufficient strength of mind to support the sight of a place where I had once been so happy, he shook his head, and answered, "that he feared it." I placed a sum of money in his hands for the poor of his flock, and then proceeded to call on Dr. Bellinden. This son of Esculapius no sooner saw me than he held out his hand, not to shake mine, as might be anticipated, but to feel my pulse.

"Good God! Sir, how ill you are looking," exclaimed he.

"Yes, I have not been well of late," and I endeavored to withdraw my wrist from his grasp.

"Do you know that you ought to be in your bed, Sir, instead of walking about. You are ill, seriously ill, Mr. Herbert. Your pulse is up to one hundred and twenty, and hard and wiry. Not the least moisture on the skin. You should return home, and go to bed directly."

I answered that it was only the fatigue occasioned by a rapid journey and want of sleep that had occasioned the symptoms he had remarked, and that, as I was called back to London immediately by business, I should not have time to lay up, and profit by his care and skill.

"Are you quite sure that you feel no uneasiness in the crico-arytenoideus lateralis?" demanded the doctor, still examining my countenance.

"Not the least," replied I, wholly ignorant of the signification of the technical words he had uttered.

"Well, that is strange," resumed he, "for you certainly appear to me to have some affection connected with the muscles of the glottis. Yet now that I look more narrowly, I begin to think that you have a derangement of the levator labii superioris ulæque nasi. Yes, certainly you have, and a very disagreeable and troublesome complaint it is, if not attended to at once."

"I confess," answered I, "that I do not know the sense of the words you have just pronounced, consequently cannot say whether I feel any symptom of the malady or not."

"Ah!" and the doctor sighed deeply, "when will science, and above all, the science of anatomy and physic, be so generally diffused, that every educated person will be able to give an accurate description of his symptoms, and in the proper terms. Then there will be no mistakes in my profession—none of those fatal errors which originate, *not*, as is too frequently but falsely asserted, in the want of skill in physicians, but in the want of accuracy in describing their complaints, so prevalent in patients. The

levator labii superioris ulæque nasi, to simplify to the unlearned, I designate the sneering muscle, Mr. Herbert; and yours, I am persuaded, has an unnatural tension, for I have been looking at it the last ten minutes."

For once, the doctor had guessed nearer the truth than usual; for, little disposed to smile, heaven knows, something like a sneer had involuntarily passed over the muscles of my lips, at his pedantry, and desire to take possession of me as a patient.

"Be assured, Mr. Herbert," resumed the Doctor, "that Pope never wrote a truer or a more philosophical line than that which says—

'The proper study of mankind is man.'

It is by studying man that I have arrived at a knowledge of physiology, that, had I but a more extended field for the exercise of my talent, would render me celebrated."

I bade the self-complacent Doctor farewell, leaving him far from being satisfied at what he considered my wilfulness and obstinacy, in not yielding to his advice. Little did Pope think that the line quoted so gravely would be taken as bearing reference to the physical instead of the moral state of man!

And I could reflect on such things, aye, and even for a moment smile at the weakness of the poor Doctor, while my own mind was even at the moment conscious of still greater weakness, and my heart was oppressed at the thought of the contents of the trunk in my chamber. Frequently during the day did I feel in my waistcoat pocket to be sure that the key of my writing-case was safely lodged in it; because in that writing-box was the key of the trunk! When I entered my house, I walked straight to the bedroom to see that the trunk had not been touched; and often did my eyes turn to it with a mingled sentiment of horror and dread.

I had ordered post-horses for an early hour on the following morning. Oh! how I wished the long evening, and longer night, were over; for I shuddered at the thought of being alone to gaze on objects that wrung my heart with sorrow, by reminding me of my lost, my adored wife, and of passing the night in the chamber with the trunk. What fearful dreams might it not occasion, the bare sight of it agitating me so violently!

My scarcely-tasted dinner removed, I summoned Mrs. Burnet to come and sit with me, so much did I dread being alone. It was no supernatural fear that haunted me, no, it was the fear of my own sad thoughts—my own troubled dreams, which tortured and unmanned me.

I encouraged the inquiries of my worthy housekeeper relative to my daughter. She had endless questions to ask, all betraying the deep interest she felt for this last scion of a house she had so faithfully served.

"And Jenny, the nurse, Sir," said she, "I suppose she is in London, with dear Miss Herbert?"

"No," replied I, "she preferred remaining in Malta, and I left her."

"What! let her young lady come back over the sea alone?" observed the good woman.

"Oh, what an unnatural, ungrateful creature she must be! It is fortunate that her poor widowed mother is in her grave, for it would have broken her heart, to know that her daughter had behaved so ill. But to speak the truth, when I heard that wicked, crazy fellow, who came here, speak of her as his intimate friend, I began to fear she could not be good for much. Ah, Sir, when a foolish girl has no steady, elderly woman, or strict mistress, to look after her, she is sure to fall into a scrape."

When the word mistress had escaped Mrs. Burnet's lips, her changed aspect, and timid glance at me, disclosed how much she regretted her inadvertence in having used a word so carefully guarded against since my arrival. Poor, faithful creature! with intuitive tact and tenderness, she knew that the wound in my heart was still too recent to bear the touch, and could not forgive herself for reverting to it.

When at length it was time to retire to bed, she offered me some syrup of hops, from her little store of medicines, kept for the use of her poor neighbors.

"A few drops, Sir, will calm your nerves, and procure you a tranquil night. Often have I known my dear lady, your honored mother, obtain a few hours' rest, when her deep grief kept her waking."

The syrup of hops produced a most salutary effect. I enjoyed some hours of refreshing slumber, and awoke more calm than I had been of late. Thankful for this relief, I possessed myself of the bottle, and after having partaken of an early breakfast, and seen the trunk safely consigned to the interior of my chaise, *malgré* the reiterated representations of my good housekeeper, that it would incommode me, and that it might be securely attached by cords behind the carriage, I placed funds in her hands to enable her to extend her charities to the poor, and wringing the hand that warmly clasped mine—its owner with streaming eyes and faltering lips praying for blessings on me and mine. I entered the chaise, and was driven rapidly away from the spot endeared to me by a thousand fond but mournful recollections, which rendered a sojourn in it too painful to be borne, until time had softened the bitterness of regret, and could enable me to look on the objects and scenes that now tortured me with less anguish.

## CHAPTER LII.

INSTEAD of proceeding directly to London, I determined to go to Portskewell, a little village not far from Chepstow, remain there a day or two, then cross over to Clifton, and thence go to London. Never for a single hour—nay, more, for even half that period, did I forget the contents of the trunk, to which my eyes were continually reverting. The horror I experienced at contemplating this unseemly receptacle of all that remained of the once lovely being to whom they appertained, far from diminishing, increased; and as I reflected that I could not give these

sacred relics the rites of Christian sepulture, I groaned aloud, and beat my breast in despair. When I stopped for the night, I had the trunk conveyed to my chamber, though well aware that its proximity to my couch would debar me from slumber; but I feared to allow it to be out of my sight, lest by some unlucky chance it might be opened, and its contents being revealed, lead to suspicion and investigation.

Arrived at Portskewell, after the most painful journey I ever made, I took up my abode at a small inn, near the water's edge; and early the next morning, opening the trunk, and enveloping a portion of its contents in a Scots shepherd's plaid, I concealed the skull in a large silk handkerchief, which I slung to my waist, beneath the large cloak I wore, and walking to the shore, hired a boat "for an hour's pleasure," as I told the owner, though my lips almost refused to utter the words.

"You had better let me or one of my lads accompany you, Sir," said the boatman, "for sudden squalls often come on here, which are dangerous for those not well accustomed to the management of a boat."

I declined the offer, however, and so peremptorily, that the man said, "just as you like, Sir, it's all one to me;" and I entered the boat, still grasping the shepherd's plaid; which I never let out of my hand, until I had placed it on the seat by me. The owner of the boat pushed it from the shore, and I took the oars and rowed towards the opposite coast; the boatman remaining at the water's edge, as if watching how I managed his little vessel, until it was nearly out of sight.

I then removed the limbs from the plaid, and let one drop into the water; proceeded in another direction, and let another fall, and so one by one always changing my course between each fragment I consigned to the deep, till all had disappeared. I then, removing the handkerchief, immersed the skull, and, with a beating heart and distended eyes, beheld the circling eddies close over it, as it sank many fathoms deep into its watery grave! I then refolded the plaid as it had formerly been, and, with trembling hands, rowed back towards the shore, within a short distance of which I continued, until my violent emotion had subsided, when I landed, and, ordering the boatman to have his boat ready for another excursion in a couple of hours, as also for the same hour the following morning, I retraced my steps to the inn.

This measure was adopted to avoid exciting suspicion by my solitary excursion that morning; and it was, perhaps, well that I had recourse to it, for my host, while serving breakfast, observed that the boatman had been there to inquire whether I had left any effects at the inn, in case I might not return with his boat.

"Did he suspect my honesty, then?" demanded I, "or was it that he feared my want of skill to manage his little vessel?"

"Perhaps a little of both, Sir," replied the landlord, laughing; "for old Will Stevens thinks as much of his boat as of his sons, and couldn't make out why you, whom he instantly took to be a landsman, should prefer rowing yourself, when you might have one of his lads to row you.

Will is a sharp old chap, and rather given to be suspicious. He fancied that you were come to this out-of-the-way place to hide from your creditors; and that all your worldly goods were concealed in your large plaid, you seemed so careful of it, he said; or under your cloak, and so was uneasy; but when I told him you had left plenty of luggage here, he was quite satisfied."

I said that, my health being poorly of late, my physician had ordered me to move about as much along the sea-coast as possible, and to be on the water, and row myself, which he thought would be good for my chest. This explanation seemed perfectly satisfactory to my host, who, I dare say, as long as his best rooms were occupied, his larder put in requisition, and his wine ordered, cared very little for the motive which led his customers to Portskewell.

A weight of anxiety seemed removed from my heart, since the remains of the dead had been consigned to the deep. No longer did I put my hand to my waistcoat pocket, to assure myself that the key of my writing-box was safe; no longer did I dread the possibility of the trunk being opened in my absence. Nevertheless, I could not divest myself of a feeling of horror, when I reflected that my hand, which should have shielded the sacred remains of my wife's sister—the lovely, the pure creature, whom my folly had doomed to a premature death—had consigned them to a watery grave. I wondered how I had found nerve to get through this painful ordeal; but the dread of discovery, of exposure, of having the name of my daughter sullied by my supposed guilt, had steeled my nerves, and enabled me to pass through this last painful trial, as it had through the heavy previous ones.

Though most desirous to leave Portskewell, I remained there two whole days, passing the greater portion of them on the water, and always alone. On one occasion I affected to let drop my plaid, before I stepped into the boat, taking care, as I did so, that the folds should open; and when Will Stevens took it up from the strand, I called out to him to take great care of it, as I would not lose it on any account, and requested he would fold it up, as before. On another, I purposely let my cloak fall from my shoulders, and noticed that the sharp old man narrowly watched my person, as if he expected to see something concealed on it.

I left this retired spot, where, having no occasion to make my name known, or no gossiping servant to reveal it, I was recognised only as the "gentleman;" which designation stood at the top of my bill. I proceeded to London as rapidly as I could, for I impatiently longed to behold my daughter, and to press her once more to my breast. I felt as if I had been months absent from her; and my fond heart prompted the question whether she had felt this separation as deeply as I had. Yet my reason whispered that, at her age, with kind friends, a charming play-fellow, and so many novel objects and scenes to attract her attention, it would be unreasonable to expect that I should be remembered with such engrossing tenderness by her, as she was by me. I found myself already forming excuses for my little disappointment she might inflict on me, by a less demonstrative mode of betraying her affec-

tion than I could have desired; and determined to be pleased—to be happy was, alas! out of the question.

I hurriedly exchanged my travelling dress for a more suitable one for such a visit, and hastened to Mrs. Neville's. How quickly beat my heart, and how my hand trembled, as I knocked at the door! I was ushered into the library; and in a few minutes after my daughter was in my arms! After pressing her again and again to my heart, I put her from me, that I might gaze on her.

Never had I seen so great an improvement as that effected during the short time she had passed with Mrs. Neville. The good taste of her kind protectress had effected this improvement in her dress, in the arrangement of her beautiful hair, and in her carriage; and the example of her charming playmate had taught her a more feminine manner. I had thought her so perfect before, that I had been blind to the defects in her dress and deportment, until now that I witnessed the vast revolution operated in both. She looked more like than ever to her angelic mother, and I was proud and grateful for the change.

The dear girl's caresses were so warm—so affectionate—that I, fastidious and jealous as I was disposed to be, at the least semblance of a diminution in her tenderness for me, felt perfectly satisfied, and expressed to her the dictates of my doting fondness.

Encouraged into confidence by my caresses, the artless child, clasping my neck with her arms, exclaimed,—

"Oh! dear papa, I am so happy with dear, good Mrs. Neville, and dear Matilda! Won't you let me stay with them always?"

What a sharp pang was that which shot through my heart, as my daughter uttered these words!

"Then you could do without me, Frances?" said I, reproachfully.

"No, papa! I could not do without you for a long, long time; but while you went into Wales, or were travelling about to other places, and I had dear Mrs. Neville to love me dearly, as she does, and dear Matilda to play with me, and walk with me, when our lessons are over—I could do without you for a short time. It is so pleasant to have some one who is like a mamma, to buy one nice dresses, and to see that they are nicely made, and properly put on; and that one's hair is nicely arranged; and to have some one who is like a sister, to play with, and not to be always with a nurse, who isn't at all like a lady, and who can't answer any of the questions I ask her,—who is always saying, 'I'm sure, Miss, I don't know.'—and, 'I wish you would not ask so many questions.' Young ladies ought not to be asking questions." Now, there have been so many things, papa, that I wanted to know, and that nurse could not tell me."

"Why did you not ask me, Frances?"

"Because sometimes when I asked, you did not seem to hear me, dear papa; and you looked so sad, that I thought my questions tired you, as they did nurse. But I ask dear Matilda every question that comes into my head, and a great, great many do come; and when I ask any that she does not know, she goes to her mamma, who

tells me so plainly,—so nicely,—that I understand it, and never forget it after. And dear, good Mrs. Neville likes me to ask her questions. It never tires her a bit, papa. Oh! I am so happy here! I am always glad when I awake in the morning, for I say to myself, I shall have such a pleasant day with Matilda; and at night, when I am going to sleep, I think how nice it will be to have the next day like the day before."

Although pleased at the knowledge of my dear child's perfect happiness, and most truly grateful to those kind friends who constituted it, so strong was the leaven of selfishness which pervaded my nature, that I could not vanquish the regret I experienced at discovering that she could be perfectly happy away from me. I, however, smoothed my brow, when a message from Mrs. Neville, that she should be glad to see me in the drawing-room, was delivered to me; and tenderly embracing my daughter, I permitted her to rejoin her young companion, while I proceeded to the tea-table. Mrs. Neville's reception of me was kind and cordial. Her own feelings had taught her to sympathize with mine, at reviewing the scene of my former happiness. My pale face was a proof to her of the chagrin I had endured since we parted, and she endeavored to soften it by the commendations she bestowed on my child. When I attempted to express my sense of obligation for the wonderful improvement I discovered in her, she declared that Frances was so sweet-tempered and intelligent a child, that it was a positive pleasure to instruct her, and greatly tended to the advantage of her own daughter by the emulation it excited in her studies.

When I returned to my hotel, I found my servant in a state of considerable alarm.

"Would you believe it, Sir," said he, "soon after you left to go to Mrs. Neville's this evening, the two ruffians, Bradstock and Motcombe, came here, and asked to see you? They were so pressing, that the porter called me to satisfy them that you were not in the house, and they assumed such an insolent and bullying tone, that I am sure, by the looks and manner of the waiters who happened to be in the hall, as also by the porter's manner, that they took these vile fellows to be creditors, or in short, Sir, some persons who had a claim on you. They had evidently been drinking, and smelt of tobacco so strongly, that the porter and waiters were anxious to get them out of the hall.

"Tell your master that it's no manner of use to deny himself to us," said one of them.

"Aye, and let him know that our business is of such importance to him, that he'd better not trifle with us," observed the other in a menacing tone.

"I assure you, Sir, I was quite ashamed and confounded by their impudence, and I know it has occasioned much talk among the waiters."

"Let me know when they call again," said I, assuming as unconcerned a tone as I could; "and mind, if I ring the bell while they are with me, you send for the police, to whom, if they attempt to be insolent, I will give them in charge."

This last part of my instructions seemed to give peculiar satisfaction to my servant. His countenance brightened up at once, and he said,



"Ah, Sir, you will be doing a real service to society in exposing such scoundrels, and in delivering them up to the law!"

Although fully convinced that these men could really do nothing more than endeavor to extort money from me by menaces, which they were unable to enforce, I nevertheless could not close my eyes during that night. All exposure of suspicious circumstances—and that there were such connected with my case I was fully aware—occasioned me such uneasiness, that I writhed at the bare notion of publicity being given to them.

To yield to the threats of these wretches, in the hope of buying their silence by gold, would, I knew by past experience, be unavailing: yet such was my reluctance to have my name brought before the public, and subjected to the comments of the world, that though aware no proof of guilt could be brought against me, and consequently that I must be acquitted of any charge preferred, I would have made a very large pecuniary sacrifice to prevent the affair in question being agitated. I knew, however, that if I once yielded to menaces, I should ever more be subjected to a repetition of them, and that the having yielded would establish a proof that I feared those who had extorted money from me. My mind fully made up on this point, I had again recourse to the syrup of hops given to me by my worthy housekeeper, and by its aid procured, towards morning, two or three hours of sleep; and having dressed, and drunk a cup of strong coffee, I awaited in no slight anxiety the threatened visit of Messrs. Bradstock and Motcombe. They did not make their appearance until two o'clock, and both bore evidence of their having had recourse to brandy to strengthen their courage.

#### CHAPTER LIII.

RAIDS is sometimes of use! Mine had been so outraged by the attempt made to intimidate me by the vile men who now stood in my presence, that indignation lent me courage to assert my own honor, and repel their insolence. I stood up as they entered the room, and looking sternly at them, inquired their business with me.

"I think you must have some inkling of it," said Bradstock.

"Not the slightest," observed I.

"Come, come, Mr. Herbert, it's no use shamming ignorance," interposed Motcombe; "we are the friends of poor Figgins, whom you attempted to murder at Malta, because you were afraid he'd let out your secret to us. He has told us all, and you must now pay for our silence, as well as his, or we will declare what we know before a magistrate, have you arrested, and delivered up to justice."

It was evident that my calmness and sternness had somewhat daunted my villanous assailants, for though they endeavored to appear confident, and free from fear, there was a trepidation in the manner of both that betrayed their surprise, if not their alarm, at finding me so cool and collected.

"If you expect to intimidate and extort money

from me, by some conspiracy hatched up between you," answered I, "you will find yourselves greatly mistaken. I shall not only firmly resist any such attempts, but punish, as far as the law will admit, those who undertake them."

"Well, we'll see who'll have the best of it," said Bradstock, "we know where the body of the lady you killed is now lying. Figgins went to Wales on purpose to have the proof, and removed the body, for fear that you would have it made away with. It's safe enough, I can tell you, and will prove against you yet."

"It's no wonder, after having killed a poor young creature, and your own sister-in-law into the bargain," remarked Motcombe, "that you should attempt to murder poor Figgins, in order that your secret should die with him. But he's alive; and although the split you made in his skull has touched his brain a little, he has his senses sometimes, and doesn't forget a single point in all he found out of your wickedness."

"No, not a point," rejoined Bradstock; "we've got him safe enough to be ready to bring him as a witness against you, in case you are so blind to your own interest as to compel us to proceed against you."

"What's a few hundred pounds, ay, or a few thousands even, in comparison with exposure, and the probability of being hanged?" demanded Motcombe. "We don't wish to be too hard on you, Mr. Herbert; indeed we don't. We would not like to make your daughter—a fine little girl she is too—an orphan; but we must think of our own interest; and if chance has put a secret on which your character, and more, your life, depends, in our keeping, we must be paid for it, we must not cheat the offended laws of our country, as the judge says when he is pronouncing sentence of death on some poor devil for a crime not one half as deep as yours, unless we can reconcile it to our consciences by receiving wherewithal to make us comfortable for the remainder of our lives."

It then occurred to me, that unless I could have some proof of the attempt of these men to extort money from me, I should not be able to prefer the charge against them; and, although very unwilling to temporize with such men, I was compelled to do so on the present occasion.

"Supposing I were disposed to avoid the publicity of a trial, which I am, however, perfectly convinced must terminate in my favor," said I, ashamed of my own enforced duplicity, in leading these vile fellows to imagine for a moment that I would yield to their attempts at imposition, "what may be the extent of your pretensions?"

They looked triumphantly at each other, concluding that they had succeeded in alarming me; and, after a short pause, Motcombe said that "fifteen hundred pounds, paid down, which would be five hundred for each of the three acquainted with the secret, could not be considered unreasonable."

"But what security should I have," demanded I, "that no further sum would ever be asked?"

They looked embarrassed; and then Bradstock offered to sign a paper, by which they should pledge themselves never more to claim anything at my hands.

"As I do not wish this interview to be prolonged," observed I; "suppose you consult together, elsewhere, the lowest terms you will accept for your silence, and send or bring me the written conditions. But I advise you to be moderate in your pretensions; for I decidedly will not give anything like the sum you have named."

"Very well, Sir, we will furnish you with our terms in writing," replied Bradstock; "but I really don't think we can take much less than the fifteen hundred. Your character is worth more than that, set aside your life, Sir, which would be in great danger."

"Yes, certainly," added Motcombe; "Mr. Herbert's character and life are worth twenty times that paltry sum, more especially with such a nice young lady for a daughter. Oh, what a terrible thing it would be for her to have her father bring disgrace on her name, or perhaps to have him hanged!"

How my blood boiled, and how I longed to punish the scoundrels! But I checked my anger, and told them that the next day I would expect to receive their terms; and they removed towards the door to withdraw.

Before they left the room, however, they turned to me, and Motcombe said, "I mean no offence, Sir, but I think it as well to tell you that it will be quite useless for you to attempt to give us the slip, as you did Figgins, more than once."

"Yes," added Bradstock, "we'll be constantly on the watch, and are too sharp to be caught napping."

I disdained to reply to these insolent hints, and they withdrew, leaving me fully determined, when furnished with a written proof of their conspiracy to extort money from me, to deliver them over to justice.

My servant made some excuse for entering my room, soon after the departure of Motcombe and Bradstock. His countenance betrayed deep dissatisfaction and disappointment; and he ventured to say, "I expected every moment, Sir, that you would ring the bell, that I might call the police to take charge of the two rascals who have just gone. I saw them leave the house in high spirits, as if they were content with the result of their visit here; and it went to my heart to see the waiters and porters looking at them with surprise and suspicion as they marched off. They were remarking, too, how long those shabby fellows had stayed with you, and what business you could have with such men."

"My intention of employing the police with regard to them, is only postponed, not abandoned," observed I. "It was absolutely necessary for me to have positive proof of their conspiracy to extort money from me, in order to proceed against them. That proof they will furnish to-morrow; and when they come, I will, as soon as it is in my hands, ring the bell for you to have the police summoned."

"And right glad I shall be to see the rascals taken up, and punished for their scheming. Figgins let out to me, when he was tipsy, that they were the greatest rogues he had ever met, and that his life would not be safe in their hands, if they got him in their power. They wanted, he said, to get secrets from him that he

never would intrust them with. I assure you, Sir," added Thomas, "that he was mortally afraid of them."

"Only imagine these men accusing me of attempting to murder Figgins, and inflicting that wound on his head which you saw him receive when he fell, and hit it against the table."

"Is it possible the villains dare make such a false charge against you, Sir?" and he opened wide his eyes in astonishment and indignation. "After such a proof of their infamy as this, it can't be doubted, Sir, but that they are capable of anything," replied Thomas.

It now occurred to me that it would be necessary for me to consult a lawyer for the prosecution of Motcombe and Bradstock, and remembering that Mr. Goldey, the executor of my poor friend Vise, was one, I determined to go and state the case to him. I found him at home, and when I informed him that I wished his aid in a legal matter, he could not conceal his satisfaction.

There are two classes of persons towards whom the wise declare a man should never have any reserve when he consults them, namely, a physician and a lawyer; and that, however humiliating to one's *amour-propre* may be the revelations, not a single circumstance of the case, physical or moral, should be omitted. I was compelled to remember this counsel several times, while relating the facts connected with my case to Mr. Goldey, for I felt aware that however favorably he might be disposed to judge from the good opinion entertained by our mutual friend Vise of me, proved by his liberal bequest, there were circumstances but too well calculated to convey suspicion against me in the disclosures I was making, and my natural pride and reserve revolted from uttering them. I was, however, compelled to begin at the beginning, in order to make him comprehend the whole case. I narrated the idiosyncrasy which, from childhood to manhood, had marked my character—the pride, the shyness which made me shrink from aught that could cast even a shade on my name.

"Yes, yes, I understand," observed he. "Our late friend, in speaking of you, often remarked that you were the proudest and shyest young man he ever knew."

I related the state of grief and excitement occasioned by arriving too late to receive the blessing of my mother, after travelling night and day without refreshment or sleep, in the hope of finding her still alive. I mentioned particularly the not having left the house from the moment of my arrival until that on which I attended the funeral of my mother, immediately after which I returned home so much exhausted by fatigue and sorrow, that I went to bed with symptoms of brain fever, and sank into a troubled slumber from which I was awaked several hours after by a loud knocking at the door, occasioned by the servant of a lady in the immediate neighborhood, a friend of my deceased parent, but whom I had never seen, coming to inquire whether a daughter of the lady's had been to my house, for that she was missing, and could nowhere be found. I stated the effect produced on my already excited mind by this news, for that, although I had never seen the lady or her daughter, I had

discovered, through my mother's letters, that both were beautiful and amiable, and that she hoped one of them might become my wife, so I felt no common interest towards them. I narrated every circumstance connected with my accompanying their servant, ill as I was, in his search; of the deep regret occasioned by its being unavailing; of the notion entertained, and repeatedly expressed to me by the servant, that the young lady must have fallen over a steep precipice near her favorite walk where the path was very narrow; and of the violent attack of brain fever which followed, keeping me many weeks confined to my bed, during the nights of which I continually dreamed that I saw the young girl fall over the precipice, nay, sometimes that I threw her over, and uttered the most incoherent ravings. I stated, that so great was the shock on my nerves, that for many months after, whenever assailed by illness, these dreams and ravings returned; that up even to the present time, if attacked by fever, to which I was peculiarly liable, I was harassed by the same dreams.

I related my marriage, the discovery of the corpse of my wife's sister on the day of my wedding; its interment in my family vault; my subsequent bad state of health, and removal into Devonshire; my wife's delicate constitution; her being ordered to Nice; her death; my grief, and its consequences; return of brain fever; Figgins being engaged to sit up with me at night, my incoherent ravings leading him to imagine me guilty of a crime, and his taking advantage of his supposed discovery to extort money from me, when, with broken health and shattered nerves, I was rendered incapable of resisting his menaces."

"But surely," said the lawyer, who had been making notes of my communication, "you were not so—(he paused to find a less harsh word than that which arose to his lips)—so incautious as to betray your fear of his threats, by yielding to his extortion? Or if you did, I trust there was no witness to your giving him money, no proof that you had done so?"

I was so ashamed of my folly, my madness, that I was greatly tempted to conceal the fact of my having given him a cheque, and for a large amount too; but convinced that this proof might be produced against me hereafter, I acknowledged the truth.

"This, Mr. Herbert," said he, "is the only bad feature in the whole of your case; the only evidence that can be brought against you. How very unfortunate it is that you gave him a cheque! Gentlemen should know enough of law to keep out of such scrapes as furnishing evidence against themselves;" and he shook his head, and looked very grave. "A large sum, too, you say?"

I named the precise one. He shook his head again, and looked still more grave.

"This will have a very bad effect, a very bad effect indeed, before a jury, should the case come to that. In all countries, and more especially in England, where money is so highly appreciated, it is always taken for granted that a man does *not* part with any considerable portion of it without some cogent reason, Mr. Herbert. What

pretext can we allege for your giving so large a sum to the man in question? He was not an old servant of yours; was not empowered by you to disburse money, pay bills, or keep cash in hand for you. There will, consequently, arise a foregone conclusion, that you must have been in some way or another in this man's power, and that the money was given to secure his silence. What has become of him? And how have the men who now conspire to extort money from you, become cognisant of the supposed secret, with the disclosure of which he first, and they now, menace you?"

I stated my belief, that they had taken advantage of his habits of intoxication to get him to reveal it, when he was no longer master of his reason.

"I perceive," said Mr. Goldey, "that yours is, indeed, a very nervous temperament, and this peculiarity has unhappily involved you in difficulties, from which it will be no easy task to deliver you; for you have, unfortunately, furnished the only dangerous evidence against yourself. But we must try our best to extricate you; and remember, above all things, that you do not allow your nervousness to influence you again in yielding a single point to those villains who have conspired against you. Have these fellows prosecuted as soon as you have the proof of their conspiracy to produce. Your taking the first step in this affair will be in your favor, but your must make up your mind, Mr. Herbert, whenever publicity is given to this business, to find that many persons will be disposed to judge you severely, solely from the fact of your having given Figgins so large a sum. The value of money is, as I before observed, so duly appreciated in England, that few will be inclined to believe you would part with it, unless from a positive necessity."

I requested Mr. Goldey to draw up a brief, and to lay it before the most eminent counsel, and then I returned to my hotel in a state of mind that might have excited the pity of my bitterest enemy.

#### CHAPTER LIV.

Soon after I entered my temporary home, a letter signed by Motcombe and Bradstock was brought me, with an intimation that they waited for an answer. I rang for my servant, and gave him instructions to have these men traced to their lodgings; and having desired the waiter to inform them that they might call the next day for a reply to their letter, I enclosed the proof of their conspiracy, which fortunately was so explicit as to furnish the clearest evidence against them, to my lawyer; and requesting him to accompany me to a magistrate, from whom a warrant for their arrest could be obtained, I walked to Mrs. Neville's to see my daughter.

Again the artless child referred to her desire to remain always in her present home; but seeing by my countenance that the wish pained me, she added, "and I want you too, dear papa, to come and live here with dear Mrs. Neville."

Such was the moodiness of my feelings, that I received this innocent proof of the undiminished tenderness of my poor little Frances as an indication of cunning which displeased me, and only replied to it by inquiring whether, as it was impossible for me to live in Mrs. Neville's house, *she* would prefer leaving it to go with me, or stay altogether with that lady? With the instinctive tact of her sex, the dear girl, instead of answering my question, put one to me, "But why," said she, "can't you come and live here, dear papa? There is such a nice room, where no one sleeps, that I am sure good Mrs. Neville would give you; and as she gives me leave to call her mamma, you would give Matilda permission to call you papa, would you not? and then we might all live together, and be so happy! Do let me ask Mrs. Neville to let you come and live with her, and be Matilda's papa, as she is now my mamma."

"No, Frances, you must never say a word more on this subject; but tell me at once whether, as I cannot live here with you, you prefer staying with Mrs. Neville and Matilda, or coming away with me?"

The dear child looked pained and embarrassed, but after a pause, replied, "If you, dear papa, will ask Mrs. Neville to let Matilda come and live with you and me, then I will prefer living with you."

I saw that the happiness of my child depended on her remaining where she was, and although the effort cost me a severe pang, I determined to sacrifice my own happiness to hers; and if Mrs. Neville were willing to take charge of her altogether, to resign her to her care, provided that I was permitted to defray all the expenses which such an arrangement must incur. I sought an interview with her, and before I could introduce the subject which led me to desire it, she opened it herself, by hoping that I had no intention of taking away Frances from her. She added, that she had conceived so warm an interest for the child, and her daughter was so much attached to her, that she desired nothing so much as to retain her. I had much difficulty in inducing her to consent to my defraying all the expenses which this increase to her family, as well as for masters in all the different branches of education and accomplishments, would occasion; and it was only when I declared that this was the sole condition on which I would leave my daughter with her, that she consented to have three hundred pounds annually placed at her banker's for my daughter's expenses. I wished to speak to her on the subject of the law-suit likely to take place, in order to prepare her to judge favorably of me before the trial. I thought that having taken charge of my daughter, it was only proper that she should be made acquainted with aught that might militate against my character, ere yet it was too late to free herself from the charge, in case she should wish to resign it. But my tongue refused to frame the words, my lips to pronounce them; so I determined to write her that a conspiracy had been formed against me, which compelled me to seek protection from the laws of my country: and assuring her of my perfect innocence of the crime of which I was accused, I added, that I could not allow her, who offered

a home to my child, to remain in ignorance of any charge that might, though but for a short time, impeach my character.

On returning to my hotel I wrote this letter, and my lawyer having arrived, I entered a carriage with him, and was driven to a magistrate, to whom he was well known, and where, having sworn information against Motcombe and Bradstock for a conspiracy, a warrant was issued against them.

I had now passed the Rubicon—there was no longer any power of retreating.

"Oh, had I but taken this step," thought I, "when first the vile Figgins began his system of extortion, how many hours of torture might I have been spared, and how free should I now stand from the suspicions to which my weak, my mad compliance with his threats, must inevitably subject me!"

I received that evening an admirable letter from Mrs. Neville, stating her implicit belief in my freedom from guilt, whatever might be the accusation brought against me; but adding, that were it possible she could suspect the friend of her lost husband, or that even the appearance of criminality might involve him in ruin, she could never forget that she had pledged herself at the death-bed of the mother of my child, to prove a parent and a protectress to her, should it ever be required, and that never should she prove faithless to that solemn promise.

This generous, this noble-minded woman's letter brought tears to my eyes, while it removed a weight of care and anxiety from my breast. Let the ordeal, through which I was to pass, terminate how it might, my child would escape the evil consequences it would entail on her unfortunate father. Safe beneath the roof of one of the most faultless and respectable of women, where naught but good example and virtuous precepts could reach her, she would grow up to be an ornament to her sex, and conciliate the regard of the estimable circle of friends who surrounded her admirable protectress; while, should I selfishly retain her with me, she would be exposed to the solitude and friendless position into which my destiny had plunged me, and might suffer from the suspicions to which my folly, my madness, must subject my character.

The following day, Motcombe and Bradstock were brought up before the magistrate and committed for trial. Irritated to the utmost degree against me, they loudly proclaimed my guilt of the charge, to conceal which, they had in pity, as they alleged, consented to receive certain remunerations. They maintained that they could furnish indubitable proofs of my having committed murder, and displayed such undaunted assurance, that Mr. Goldee was greatly alarmed at the turn things were likely to take, as also at seeing that the charge had already produced a strong impression against me in the minds of all those who had been present at the examination.

"This will be a very serious inconvenience, if no worse," whispered he; "the charge they have made is not bailable, and it will be very annoying to you to submit to confinement, until the trial comes on."

"How! confinement did you say?" exclaimed I. "Surely the unsupported evidence of two

such scoundrels cannot subject me to such treatment?"

"I fear it will, though," observed he, "for the law is very strict relative to such charges."

To be sent to a prison! There was degradation, wretchedness, and madness, in the thought! And yet this had I brought down on my own head; the consciousness of which fact only served to increase my misery. My total ignorance of the law had led me into the fearful position in which I now found myself placed; and bitterly did I execrate the folly that had wrought the evil. Why had I not previously to indicting Motcombe and Bradstock, inquired the possibility of a result like the present to myself from such a measure?

These reflections were now, alas! too late, and naught was left me but to conceal as well as I could the agony of my mind, and await the evil I had brought on myself.

The magistrate now received the charge of my accusers. They were sworn, and I was committed to prison,—there to remain until my innocence should be proved; while they were condemned to the same doom.

Mr. Goldey's countenance had assumed a very grave and anxious expression; and although he attempted to offer some common-place consolations to me, it was evident that he was far from thinking as lightly of what had occurred as he wished me to believe. The magistrate and he spoke some time together in a low voice; and I heard the words, "The bill may be ignored, and then your client will recover his liberty," uttered by the former. "At all events, the trial will very soon come on," resumed the magistrate.

"A gentleman of family and fortune," said Mr. Goldey; "highly esteemed and respected, and only accused by two fellows of infamous character."

"So much the better for your client," replied the magistrate. "I am very sorry that he will be put to a temporary inconvenience; but it can't be helped, Mr. Goldey; and of course you can arrange that he shall suffer as little discomfort as possible. There are good rooms in the prison, and these Mr. Herbert's position and means will enable him to have."

Mr. Goldey accompanied me in the carriage called to convey me to my new and hateful abode, as well as two of the police; and, drawing my hat over my eyes, I sank back to avoid being seen by the passers.

To describe my feelings would be impossible. Weak and helpless as a child, my terror almost deprived me of reason; and when I entered the massive walls of the prison, and heard the heavy gates closed after me, I was ready to abandon myself to despair. Mr. Goldey arranged with the jailor for all the amelioration which money could produce in such a dwelling, and remained with me until the hour when visitors are dismissed.

What would I not have given to have had him remain with me! But it was impossible; so I saw him depart with a moodiness that alarmed me for my own sanity, now when I most required all my reason.

Soon after he had departed, the turnkey inquired whether I would not have some supper.

"You can have what you like, Sir," said he, "and wine fit for any gentleman. We know how to treat gentlemen here."

"Yes, let me have some wine and water," replied I.

"Take my advice, Sir; drink the wine plain—'twill do you more good; for when a gentleman hasn't been used to such places as this, his spirits are apt to sink just at first; and wine does him good."

I drank a few glasses of the wine, which cheered me a little, and soon after fell into a deep but troubled sleep, from which I was awakened at an early hour by the noise occasioned by the opening of the doors, and the clanking of the chains, keys, and bars. For a few minutes I could not recall my senses sufficiently to remember where I was; but when I looked around and beheld the iron barred windows and style of the chamber, too soon did I become conscious of the place, and of all the painful events of the previous day.

I had never formed an idea of the interior of a prison; and even the modified form in which I now beheld it, struck me with dread and disgust. The mixture of unclean finery and sordid squalidness in the furniture, was offensive to the eye; and the odor of the ill-ventilated chamber, into which the fresh air was seldom allowed to penetrate, was no less so to my nasal organs.

I groaned in spirit when I reflected that in this odious room I might be compelled to remain some time; nor did my spirits improve when the turnkey brought me the morning newspapers, giving, in the police reports, the particulars of the examination and commitments of the previous day, headed by a charge of murder against Marmaduke Herbert, Esq., a gentleman of considerable fortune, by two men named Motcombe and Bradstock, against whom Mr. Herbert had sworn information for a conspiracy to extort money from him.

This publicity, although anticipated, tortured me. I fancied that henceforth, wherever I might go, every eye would be turned on me, that already I was prejudged and found guilty in public opinion. I dreaded even to meet the glance of the turnkey, and would have desired not to see even my own servant, whose services, however, I could not dispense with. Had I been actually the guilty wretch which Motcombe and Bradstock accused me of being, I could not have shrunk more from observation than I now did, although morally certain that the result of a trial must exculpate me from guilt, even if it could not exonerate me from the suspicious appearances to which my own madness could alone have given rise. How I loathed my past cowardice, and yet my present pusillanimity was scarcely less reprehensible! The changed aspect of my servant when he presented himself in my prison, although it proved the deep interest he felt in my situation, testified also the alarm it excited in his mind. I could perceive that my present abode seemed to furnish him with a solution to the mysterious circumstances connected with Figgins' visits to Naples, Sorento, Palermo, and Malta, and finally, to my admitting such a man beneath my roof. In short, I saw, or imagined I saw, that my own servant

had prejudged me; and although his assiduity to serve me had increased rather than diminished, I was more disposed to feel humiliated by, than grateful for it, so prone is a proud mind to reject even kindness, if accompanied by aught that can irritate it. I felt inclined to remain in bed, rather than go through the fatigue of dressing, which would bring me into more immediate personal contact with my servant, for while appearing to be occupied with the newspapers, though, Heaven knows, I hardly knew what they contained save what related to me, I had no necessity to address him; but I mastered this inclination, and, making an effort, arose to be ready to receive Mr. Goldey's promised visit.

#### CHAPTER LV.

I COUNTED the hours, but still Mr. Goldey came not. What could occasion his protracted absence? A thousand vague fears connected with it tortured my mind, the most prominent of which was, that he believed me guilty, and would see me no more! My reason in vain combated this dread, a dread that gained ground every minute that marked the progress of time by my watch, which I kept continually looking at. I tried to find consolation in the consciousness of my innocence of the crime with which I was charged, and in the reflection, that of dishonor and guilt alone should a man be ashamed; but alas! I had not now to learn, that reason is often unable to vanquish the terror of imagination; and that to a proud and sensitive mind, the dread of the exposure of its weakness is almost as appalling as if crime, and not folly, were to be revealed.

At length Mr. Goldey arrived; for hours had I expected him. Oh, how long and tedious had they appeared, before he made his appearance! Little had I ever imagined that his presence could give me such satisfaction as I now experienced at beholding him.

He looked fatigued and anxious, and I suppose my countenance had revealed to him how much inquietude the delay in his coming had occasioned me, for he said, "I couldn't come sooner, I assure you I couldn't, although I tried all in my power. But I had so many places to go to, so many persons to see, that every moment since I arose this morning at an early hour has been filled up. I trust, however, that my time has not been thrown away. Fortunately for you, the bill of indictment preferred by those scoundrels against you, will be brought before the proper authorities to-morrow, and I indulge sanguine hopes that it will be ignored, in which case you will immediately be restored to liberty, which will be a great point gained, for I was fearful there might be a delay of several days here."

I could have embraced him as he uttered these words, and yet I believed them to be too good to be true.

Mr. Goldey lost not an opportunity like the present to launch out into all the technicalities

of his profession, the greater number of which were, in truth, utterly incomprehensible to me. But no longer did I feel disposed to find fault with them, nor with the more than ordinary degree of self-complacency with which he pronounced them. I felt that he was now invested with a very different character in my eyes, to that which I had regarded him in our first interview. *Then*, he only appeared ridiculous; *now*, he was the sole person upon whom I could count to extricate me out of the difficulties in which I had so unhappily placed myself. I listened with breathless interest to his legal phraseology, and was sorry to see him take his departure, although, as he assured me, it was for the purpose of attending to my case.

When left alone, my gloomy thoughts, banished during his presence, returned with increased force; and, when I sought my couch, I only slumbered a short time, when I started from it in terror, believing myself to be in a Court of Justice, invested with much more awful solemnity than any such court ever was. I seemed to behold the malicious faces of the opposing counsel; the alarmed ones of my own. The cool assurance of the witnesses against me,—the embarrassed manner of those on my side,—the contemptuous looks of the crowded audience, and the stern glance of the judge. My brain seared by fire, and cold drops, wrung by agony, fell fast from my brow. Mrs. Neville and my daughter seemed to be present, and gazed on me with sorrow, mingled with horror—until my child, the burning blush of shame glowing on her lovely face, and indignation flashing from her eyes, tried to hide her countenance with her handkerchief, and uttering a piercing shriek, fell, lifeless, to the earth.

Such were my dreams,—and sleep became no longer "tired nature's sweet restorer," but a fearful dream which tortured, and thrilled me with terror. When awaking from such troublesome dreams, and looking at my prison, I wondered how I ever had the courage to draw such misery on myself, by instituting legal proceedings against Motcombe and Bradstock, when, by the sacrifice of fifteen hundred pounds, I might have purchased their silence, if not for ever, at least for some time; and in that time death might snatch me from their power, or rid the earth of them. Was not the unusual courage on my part, which urged me to resistance, an outbreak of folly—of madness? And I dwelt on the question, until, as on many previous occasions, I strongly doubted my own sanity.

Mr. Goldey sent me the brief he had drawn up to be given to counsel; and as I perused it, I was compelled to acknowledge that, notwithstanding the innumerable instances of tautology and technicalities, which rendered it tedious, and obscured its sense, he had omitted nothing of all I had stated to him. The following day Mr. Goldey came to me early.

"I still hope," said he, "that the bill of indictment against you will be ignored this day, and that you will be restored to liberty. I cannot think, that upon hearsay evidence, which, after all, is the only evidence those rascals can bring forward, a true bill will be found. We can, if it be thrown out, as I expect, proceed against

the parties for false-imprisonment and perjury, nevertheless, it will be necessary to summon friends to give their testimony to your character on the trial; and the more highly respectable and well-known they may be, the better. Think over those with whom you have most lived in England, and make a list, as well as of the individuals on the Continent with whom you have been on habits of intimacy."

The ensuing day the bill of indictment against me was ignored, and I was liberated after three days passed in prison, my sole redress being to bring an action for false-imprisonment and perjury against men already sunk too low to suffer from any additional charge.

Mr. Goldey deemed it necessary that intelligence should be obtained of Figgins, so I wrote to the medical man, at Malta, to whose care I confided him, to inform me of his actual state and whether he was still there.

In due time I received an answer, stating that Figgins was in prison at Malta, where he had, been lodged, as an accomplice in a robbery committed by two Englishmen, who had absconded, and for whose apprehension a reward had been offered. The abuse of strong liquors, acting on the fevered brain of this man, had rendered the wound in his head of a more serious character than had first been anticipated. His intellects were occasionally impaired, and his wretched female companion had met with great ill-usage at his hands. A subscription had been raised for her at Malta, and she had embarked for England a short time previous to the date of the letter I now received.

Mr. Goldey thought it advisable to have Figgins transferred from the prison at Malta, to one in London, in case his presence or evidence might be required; and the necessary steps being taken to effect this transfer, the order was sent out. I ventured not to give any opinion on my own case, for I observed that Mr. Goldey was disposed to suspicion whenever I interfered; so, though I did not in the slightest degree oppose Figgins's being set to England, I entertained a secret dread that his presence would greatly tend to create prejudice against me. If, when beneath my roof, his appearance was disreputable and disgusting, how much more so must it have become, by his increased habits of inebriety, and the reckless squalor that generally is induced by a long sojourn in prison! But the die was cast; I had placed myself in the hands of my legal adviser, and must abide the consequences.

## CHAPTER LVI

IN a few days after the receipt of the letter from Malta, the unfortunate woman who had been the nurse-maid of my daughter came to implore my pardon, and to entreat my charity. She had discovered my abode through having met my servant by chance in the street, and traced him to it. The misery and destitution to which this unfortunate woman had been

reduced by Figgins, who had not only plundered her of her wages, but robbed her of all her clothes, disarmed my anger. She told me that while Figgins was still under the doctor's care, his two infamous companions, one of whom had been absent from Malta for some time, and had only a day or two returned, came to the lodging, to which the doctor had had him removed, commanding the strictest abstinence to be observed,—those men constantly plied him with brandy, in defiance of the doctor's injunctions and her representations, until he became delirious. She was sure they wanted to cause his death. They questioned her closely about me, and when Figgins was out of his mind, they cross-examined him about some secret concerning me, which they said he possessed, and for concealing which I had given him large sums of money. Figgins raved about my having murdered my wife's sister by throwing her over a precipice, and of his having gone to Wales and discovered the body.

They noted down every word he uttered, and when they got out all he knew or imagined, for he was seldom an hour in his sober senses, they used to pour spirits down his throat, in spite of all she could say to prevent it; "It was from his raving that I, for the first time discovered that he had made a fool and a dupe of me, Sir," said the wretched woman, "and that instead of being in love with me, as he swore over and over again, he only pretended it, in order to know all about you, Sir, and about your movements. At Nice he was always asking me questions about your place in Wales. Whether there were high rocks near it, and whether any lady had ever been killed there? I thought it no harm to tell him that the only lady ever supposed to fall over the cliff was Miss Maitland, the sister of my poor mistress. He then said he'd go to Wales, to satisfy himself that I bore a good character in my native place, before he'd make up his mind to marry me; and as I knew he could not hear anything against me, I was quite pleased that he should go, for I thought when he came back we should be married.

"When he returned to Nice, he said he must put off our wedding until he got some money, which he expected very soon, and which would enable us to set up in business; and he made me promise that wherever you went, Sir, I should immediately write and tell him, in order that he might know where to come to marry me, the minute he got the money he expected. So I wrote to him from every place you went to, Sir, and he behaved very well to me until he took up with his wicked companions, Motcombe and Bradstock, and then he took to drinking, and became quite another man. Still, as he always swore he'd marry me, I like a fool wouldn't leave Malta when I thought him so ill. His companions took every shilling he had, and then he asked me for my wages, telling me he'd soon have plenty of money. And when my wages were gone, he made me sell my clothes, and Motcombe and Bradstock got the price of them from him, for he was afraid of them, and dared not refuse them anything. I was then left penniless, and with only the clothes I wore; and he used to curse and strike me, Sir, because I

had no more money to give him; and his bad companions wanted to insult me, and abused and even beat me, because I wouldn't I listen to their infamous proposals. They used to go out at night and bring the stolen property to Figgins's lodgings.

"I had remained in the house you had, Sir, the owner having allowed me to remain there, and keep it clean until it was let. These bad men often wanted to come into it, but I would not let them, and never saw them except twice a day, when I used to go and see how Figgins was going on. One night an attempt was made to break into the house, but I heard the noise, and gave such an alarm, by screaming out of an upper window, that the robbers had to run away; and I could take my oath that they were Motcombe and Bradstock, for it was a moonlight night, and I saw them almost as plain as if it were day.

"They broke into another house that night, and brought the plunder to Figgins's lodgings; and, would you believe it, Sir! they wrote a letter to the police, saying where a part of the property could be found, for the handwriting was discovered to be Bradstock's: and they escaped from Malta, leaving Figgins to suffer for their crime." He was taken up, and thrown into prison, and the doctor, out of pity, made a subscription to take me back to England. I never thought, Sir, there could be such wickedness in the world. I have lost my character by my folly, and become a miserable broken-hearted creature, with no one to blame but myself."

I wrote a note to my lawyer by this unfortunate woman, authorizing him to give her pecuniary assistance, and place her in a lodging, to be ready in case her evidence should be required. I was afraid to give her money myself, lest it should be deemed that I was tampering with a witness; but though inclined to save this unhappy woman from further degradation and misery, I laid a stern prohibition on her ever going to see my daughter, in case she might discover her abode.

"I forgot to tell you, Sir," said the nurse, "that the last robbery committed by Motcombe and Bradstock was on an officer at Malta, who, being on the point of coming to England with all his effects packed up, had removed from the barracks to the inn nearest the point where persons embark, and was having a take-leave dinner with his brother officers, when these thieves entered the room by the window, and having stolen all he possessed, sailed for England by the very packet that he was to come in. One of the robbers dropped a silk pocket-handkerchief in the room, by which, it being marked with his name, he was known to be the thief. The officer came over in the same packet with me, Sir, and I heard he was determined to offer a reward for their apprehension, and to prosecute the thieves.

"What is the officer's name?" inquired I.

"Major M'Culloch," replied the nurse.

It flashed across my mind that I had heard the name before, and, after a few minutes' reflection, I recollected that it was of this very individual my old acquaintance, Mrs. Scuddamore, had spoken when I met her at Portsmouth,

on my arrival in England, to which place she had gone to meet her expected friend. Nothing, I felt, could be more favorable to my case than to have the real characters of Motcombe and Bradstock proved. The establishment of the fact of their robberies would inevitably cast a strong doubt on their evidence, and render their charges more than suspicious.

I saw Mr. Goldey on the following day, and he, too, thought the arrival of Major M'Culloch a very fortunate circumstance. It occurred to me that it might be possible for me to leave the Major to prosecute these men for robbery, and proceed no further myself.

"The more I reflect on this business," observed he, "the more do I feel convinced that, for your own sake, you should institute the strictest inquiry, to bring every circumstance to light concerning this disagreeable and painful affair: otherwise the charge made at the police-office by these scoundrels, and your being committed to prison on it, will give rise to a thousand rumors and suspicions, which can only be put an end to by a public investigation."

Again did my moral pusillanimity prompt me to avoid the measure advised by Mr. Goldey; but he got so angry when I uttered a few words indicative of this desire, that I no longer betrayed my feelings, but merely observed that I had imagined the indisputable proofs of the guilt of those who had impeached my character, as also the ignoring of the bill against me, would prevent the necessity of a trial.

"So it might," replied my lawyer, "if the world were prone to judge all that are accused, fairly, instead of harshly. But as, unhappily, in society men are more ready to listen to attacks against their fellow-men, however unworthy of credence those may be who make them, than to doubt the alleged guilt because the accusers are vile, it becomes the positive duty of those assailed to justify themselves from the least stain at tempted to be cast on their characters."

There was a sternness in the nature of Mr. Goldey that precluded the entire and perfect confidence which a client should repose in his lawyer. I had originally fully determined to conceal nothing from him, except my knowledge of the death of my wife's sister, and the mad conduct on my part that followed it, and led to all my subsequent troubles. That part of my history I felt sure he would doubt, for he was such a matter-of-fact man, and possessed so much plain common sense and self-control, that he could not be made to comprehend that any person not positively mad could draw on himself the suspicion of a fearful crime, by concealing the body. I felt that his eyes would be ever on me, if I revealed all these circumstances—that he would believe me to be a murderer—or a maniac.

The astonishment he had betrayed, and the reproaches he had uttered, when I confessed my having given Figgins a cheque on my banker for the large sum he expected from me at Nice, had prevented my revealing other facts to him, with which I was aware he ought to be made acquainted;—as, for instance, the embarrassments into which his boastings at Palermo had got me there, and my having allowed a man



of whose infamy I could not entertain the slightest doubt, to become an inmate of my house at Malta. I felt my heart beat quicker with wounded pride and shame at the thought that these facts, so calculated to injure me in public opinion, would, nay must, come before the world in any investigation that might take place. I anticipated the anger and disgust Mr. Goldey must experience when he, too late, should discover my disingenuousness and folly in withholding from him what it was of so much importance he should know. Yet with this conviction, I could not bring myself to tell him the whole truth, and like an idiot—a madman—I preferred leaving him to learn the facts that would redound so much to my disadvantage, from evidence in a court of justice, which he had no means to refute, or even to palliate the evil effect of. To a man of a less rugged and stern nature, more skilled to comprehend the weakness of his fellow-beings, and to sympathize with them, I could have revealed the whole truth, and prepared him to make light before a court of justice of circumstances really important in the case. But to let him remain in total ignorance of them I knew was madness, and yet I allowed this to be, rather than meet his suspicious or contemptuous glance, such was the weakness, the pusillanimity of my nature! Often did I put the question to myself, whether I, who was, Heaven knows, little disposed to incredulity, would believe the history of my own troubled life, if related to me by another? and I groaned in spirit as my reason told me that I could not; and that the utmost extent of my charity could not go the length of absolving the individual who revealed it, from strong suspicion of crime, if not from absolute condemnation.

#### CHAPTER LVII.

THE following day Mr. Goldey learned, at the office where Motcombe and Bradstock had been examined and committed to prison, that a Major McCulloch had been there to lodge information against them for a robbery on him at Malta, and as my servant had them traced to their lodgings two days before their arrest, he was enabled to furnish the address, and a warrant of search was issued to a constable.

At the lodgings nearly the whole of the Major's property was found, a small portion of it only having been disposed of. Other property had also been discovered, which proved that these men had been active in their depredations; and amongst the rest of the spoil was a gold watch, chain, and seals, a showy shirt-pin, a snuff-box, and some clothes, which my servant recognised as having belonged to Figgins.

While all this additional evidence of the culpability of Motcombe and Bradstock was furnished, these knaves had not been idle in prison. An attorney of a low grade was induced, by the hope of reward which they held out, to enlist in their cause against me; and he drew up under their instructions a brief, every charge in which they

swore they could substantiate. I was accused of having murdered the sister of my wife, whose body I had concealed in a cavern, near to which the crime had been committed. I was further charged with having given large sums of money to a person of the name of Figgins, who had discovered my crime, and whom I afterwards attempted to murder, lest he should betray my secret. The said Figgins, they asserted, had been greatly distressed for money a short time, yet was, soon after, living extravagantly, and in the possession of a gold watch, a snuff-box, and other expensive trinkets, as well as of clothes fit for a gentleman. That they knew that I had tried to conceal my abode from the said Figgins, and had gone secretly from place to place for that purpose; but that he had, through the means of a female servant in my establishment, been always kept aware of where to find me. That they knew the said Figgins to have expended hundreds in a short time. That when he was without money at Naples, he had followed me to Palermo, and had, in a few days after, returned, well stocked with cash. That, having a strong suspicion that he was paid for keeping some important secret probably a crime, of which he often gave hints when intoxicated, they had formed a plan to detect it, and for this purpose one of them had gone to Palermo, where he learnt that a person answering in every respect to the description of Figgins had been there, and had been seen to meet Mr. Herbert in private. That Mr. Herbert had gone in person to his banker's, and had drawn for two hundred pounds, which, when the banker offered to send to his house by a clerk, Mr. Herbert declined, and took charge of himself, the whole amount being, by his desire, paid in gold. That, the following evening Figgins, being intoxicated had attempted to intrude himself into a reading-room, open only to subscribers, and on being excluded, boasted, as proof of his respectability, that he was the possessor of, and could produce two hundred pounds, being precisely the amount which Mr. Herbert had drawn from his banker. That Figgins said he could have as much more whenever he liked, and that Mr. Herbert, a gentleman of great fortune and family, was his friend, would answer for him, and that he could make Mr. Herbert do whatever he pleased. That the boasting and insinuations of Figgins, coupled with his intoxication and low manners, had excited strong suspicions in the mind of the banker, and other gentlemen at Palermo, who were cognisant of these circumstances, that Figgins had some extraordinary power over Mr. Herbert. That he had avowed he could make that gentleman tremble at his nod, as he held his fate in his hands. That some of the English merchants resident at Palermo, desirous to institute an inquiry into this mysterious transaction, had search made for Figgins, who they had found had sailed for Naples the following day, whither these gentlemen had immediately written to have inquiry made about him, in order that the connexion between him and Mr. Herbert should be sifted, and if his influence over the latter originated in crime, it should be, for the sake of justice, laid open.

The bankers at Nice and at Palermo were

summoned to come to England to give evidence of the payment of the money made by them, or to furnish, through the English Consul at both places, attested proofs of these facts.

The merchants at Palermo, who had taken the strongest part against me, were written to, to send statements of the cause of their suspicions. My servant was served with notice to attend the trial, and the nurse, whose arrival in England was discovered, received a similar one.

Disappointed in their scheme of extorting money from me, and maddened by my having handed them over to the law, Motcombe and Bradstock, urged on by a spirit of vengeance, had stopped at no falsehood, no perjury, to injure me.

My lawyer was in high spirits at the proofs furnished by Major McCulloch of the robbery committed by these vile men at Malta. Keen in the pursuit of criminals as a sportsman after game, he exulted in the anticipated certainty of their punishment.

"The counsel I have employed," said he, "are of opinion, that the known infamy of your accusers, as well as their accusation having only been made after you had commenced a prosecution against them for a conspiracy to extort money from you, and, above all, the bill of indictment against you being ignored, renders your going into a formal defence almost a work of supererogation."

"And I also am of that opinion," observed I.

"What! you would allow your name to be bandied about as one who had never cleared up his reputation against charges of crime of the most serious nature, or who had compromised with his accusers?" replied Mr. Goldey; "the charges and your commitment to prison have been published in the newspapers, bruited about in society, and cannot now be silenced except by the decision of a court of justice. You know little of the world, Mr. Herbert, if you are not aware that a charge against any man, however respectable, although preferred by persons of known disreputability, will always find credence among a certain class of individuals, so much more prone are they to believe in guilt than in innocence. The class I refer to is, unhappily, a more numerous one than that disposed to be indulgent, and should a trial not clearly disprove the charges made by these scoundrels, your name would be henceforth a mark for vituperation, and must eventually lead to many actions on your part, for defamation. One of the peculiarities of our time, Mr. Herbert, is a dread of being duped, not only as regards our pecuniary affairs, but our opinions. Hence many men, not naturally malicious, are ready to pronounce every individual not belonging to the immediate circle of their friends guilty of any crime brought against them, lest they themselves should be laughed at for an excess of good nature, which they imagine to mean nothing less than weakness, and of which they would feel ashamed. It is with these persons, as with those who set up to be connoisseurs of old pictures. They are ever prone to pronounce the specimens exhibited to them not to be originals, because they know that there are more copies than originals in the market, and in fear that the accuracy of their judgment should

be called in question. Every man now-a-days would prefer being considered a sharp fellow who cannot be imposed on, rather than pass for a generous-minded one who could."

Though aware of the truth of Mr. Goldey's opinion, I nevertheless now heartily regretted having employed him. I wished I had fallen in with a legal adviser less addicted to carrying measures to extremities, and could not help suspecting that a love of litigation, and the profits to be derived from it, had a much greater influence over him than a regard for my reputation. I felt an increasing repugnance towards him growing on me every day. At our interviews, and they were now frequent, I fancied that his searching and stern eye was often on me, and that its expression was full of suspicion. Had he divined that, after all, there was something held back from him, and that I had some strong, some hidden motive, for wishing to avoid a trial? In proportion as this fear grew on me, did my dislike to him increase; and yet, when I examined the purport of his actual words, I could find nothing to justify my suspicion; and with the pertinacity peculiar to nervous persons, who are ever prone to be self-tormentors, I referred to his looks for a motive for my inherent dread of him, when in his words I could not discover one. Alas! it was in the consciousness of my own disingenuousness towards him that this fear of him originated, although I was unwilling to admit it, even to myself.

I went every day to see my daughter, and marked with heart-felt satisfaction her progress in her studies and accomplishments. Yet even this solitary source of comfort was not without its alloy, for as I saw her expand into health and beauty, becoming every day more attractive, and noticed her easy and graceful demeanor, her gentle and polished manners, the facility with which she acquired all that was taught her, and her retentiveness of the knowledge and accomplishments once acquired, I experienced a deep pang, at reflecting that one so calculated to excite attention and fascinate regard, should bear a name at which the finger of scorn might one day point, marring the brilliant prospects and position in society to which she might otherwise so naturally aspire. I would have her name as bright, as spotless as herself; I would not that even those unconnected with her who bore it, should ever draw a stain on it; how then did I shrink at the notion that I, her father, her only living relative, should, by my own madness, have drawn suspicion of crime on myself, and if guilt could not be proved, at least expose my name to the suspicions of the world, by certain inexplicable circumstances connected with my past life.

Partial insanity, the most charitable cause that could be alleged for my strange conduct, must prove highly injurious to her; for to wed a girl, however charming, who was suspected of having a taint of insanity in her blood, would be as insurmountable an objection to most men as to form an alliance with one whose father had incurred dishonor. In either way my daughter, the sole object of all my affection, of all my interest in life, must suffer by me, and I loathed myself as this mortifying reflection passed through my mind. Why had I not been a man

bold in the consciousness of having really committed no crime, instead of a pusillanimous idiot? Had I been the first, I would have repelled with indignation and scorn the first menaces of Figgins, and by defying him have saved myself from the suspicious circumstances which my yielding to them had entailed on me.

Although it was now too late to dwell on these painful reminiscences, I could not banish them from my thoughts; and, heartily despising myself, I felt that my daughter must one day or other have cause to blush for, if not to hate me.

Mad as had been my moral cowardice in submitting to the threats of Figgins, I now considered the late effort to resist the attempt at extortion made by his vile companions as no less a proof of insanity, knowing, as I ought to have done, that in prosecuting them, circumstances must be revealed which would inevitably implicate me in suspicions, from which I could not extricate myself! How far wiser and better would it have been to have silenced them by the sacrifice of a few hundreds—aye, or even a few thousands—than to have stirred up this fire, which, though it must burn them, would sear me so deeply as to leave indelible marks through life!

There are persons—and I unhappily was one of those—who are born to be miserable! Let it not, however, be imagined from this assertion that I was a fatalist; no, my belief was founded on the influence exercised over individuals by their peculiar temperaments, depending much on the health of their parents, and the character of those with whom their childhood was passed.

The elasticity of my mind was greatly impaired by the being, for so long a time, a constant witness to the passionate grief of my poor mother, to control which, no effort was ever made on her part; and subsequently by my being subjected to the baleful influence of my guardian, Mr. Trevyllan, whose gross selfishness and evil opinion of mankind had passed like a simoom over my youthful mind, destroying every bud of promise, every plant of goodness that might have grown to maturity in it. With this moral blight came also a physical one: morbidness of feeling was accompanied by weakness of nerves; and an unhealthy pride, that made me shrink from degradation, was, alas! unsupported by the self-respect that should have shielded it from subjecting itself to aught like insult.

All these peculiarities, so fertile in producing future misery, had never been corrected. They grew with my growth, and strengthened with my strength; and even now, when I could reflect and philosophise on them, I had not the power to vanquish or mitigate them.

Aware that my name had been mixed up in the police reports with those of the vile wretches whom I had prosecuted for conspiracy, and whose charges against me had led to my imprisonment, I could not bring myself to resume my evening visits to Mrs. Neville, notwithstanding her repeated entreaties, lest I should encounter at her house some person not disposed to meet me under present circumstances. She, with the *kindness which ever characterized her, endeavored to induce me to come, until finding me so*

averse to comply with her reiterated solicitations, she ceased to urge me; and then, with my wonted habit of turning every thing into some cause for self-torment, I was pained that she no longer pressed me to join her evening circle, and attributed her not doing so to a consciousness that my presence would not be acceptable to the individuals composing it,

This suspicion goaded—tortured me; and I conclude, produced, though I did not intend it, some striking change in my manner to this admirable woman. She, however, maintained the same kind and cordial behavior to me, and evinced every day an increased interest in, and a more tender affection to my daughter, who, in return, doted on her and her playmate.

Often, ungrateful and selfish as I was, did I listen, with a moodiness of mind and a jealous heart, to the constant praises bestowed by my innocent child on her benefactress and companion.

"Yes," thought I, "*they* are all and everything to her, while I am as nothing. Her happiness no longer depends on *me*; my presence has ceased to be necessary to her. Why did I permit this, the only tie that binds me to life, to be loosened? Why allow others to usurp that place in the heart of my child that should be occupied wholly by me?"

At such moments I was frequently tempted to reclaim the possession of my daughter, and to take her to some far distant region, leaving the suit to which Mr. Goldey attached such vital importance, to drop to the ground, and the world to form its own uncharitable conclusions on my flight. But could I now tear my child from those to whom she was so fondly attached, without indicting such chagrin on her affectionate heart as might injure her health, and impair the elasticity of her spirits? Would it not be cruel, nay, barbarous, to deprive her of the only protectress on whom I could rely in case of my death—the only friend who constituted her happiness? Could I bear to behold her pining away in some distant land for those so dear to her, and for those comforts and elegances which habit had now rendered necessary to her? No; of this selfishness I was not yet hardened enough to be guilty, and I offered up this sacrifice of my own happiness to that of my beloved child.

Anxiously did I watch her manner to me, during every visit I paid her. Did I perceive the slightest shade of indifference on her part, the least demonstration of a desire to abridge the length of my stay, I grew jealous, and moody; and the indications of dissatisfaction, the motive for which the dear innocent girl could not divine, inspired her with a timidity, and fear of giving offence that led every day to a decrease of confidence and cordiality between us. I mentally accused her of a want of gratitude for the sacrifice I made in permitting her to remain with her new friends,—a sacrifice which I thought should have called forth in her a livelier affection to me, while she was wholly unconscious how much it cost me to make it, or, in fact, that it was a sacrifice at all. How frequently do we accuse those dear to us of not duly appreciating acts of kindness, of the extent of which they are ignorant, or of the self-denial required to carry them into effect of which they never even dream!

Sometimes Frances would look towards the time-piece on the chimney, with an anxious eye, after I had been for some minutes silently brooding over some fancied evidence on her part of impatience to leave me; and I would quit my chair, deeply hurt, and coldly bid her farewell, when she, flinging her arms round my neck, would exclaim, "How sorry I am, dear papa, that Matilda and our governess are waiting for me to go to Madame Tussaud's wax-works, and it is now the time, for I should have liked to stay longer with you!"

## CHAPTER LVIII.

THESE *naïve* explanations of the causes of her looking towards the time-piece sometimes disarmed my displeasure; but not always was I so reasonable, for there were days when my nerves, affected by a sleepless night or troubled dreams, and painful reflections, I was rendered irascible, and although my tongue did not utter reproaches, my heart formed them. "What," thought I, "can this creature, on whom I so fondly dote, and whom I see but for a short period once a day, grudge the brief time devoted to me, and long to get released from my presence, in order to seek some puerile gratification!"

I judged my dear and innocent child as if she were a woman to whom every feeling of my breast was laid open, who, aware of the sacrifices I was making for her, and of the jealous pangs of a too fond heart, trifled with and neglected me—I forgot that over this burning lava of love was a deep and hardened incrustation of reserve that concealed the fire. That the coldness of my manner, superinduced by the habit of moodiness, must naturally operate to render a girl of Frances's age shy and embarrassed with me, and that not possessing the power of amusing or interesting her, I ought not to wonder that she preferred the society of those who did. "If she knew how I love her," would I sometimes say, "she would not prefer any one to me?" forgetting that it is the natural impulse of every human being to prefer those who most contribute to his or her happiness; and a cool and dispassionate examination of my own peculiar case, had I been capable of making it, would have convinced me that with all my boasted love, I did not personally contribute to that of my daughter. "Would she be less happy were I a thousand miles off?" was a question I often asked myself; and the answer was, "No," for there she would not have to support a daily visit, rendered uncongenial by the gloomy countenance, grave manner, and fits of abstraction and silence, of her unhappy father. There were times when these reflections tortured me; yet, strange to say, at other moments they occasioned a vague sense of relief by the conviction that if any revelation or suspicion in the forthcoming trial should cast dishonor on my name, and consequently render a residence in my native land insupportable to me, it would be some consolation

to know, that my absence, however prolonged, would not interfere with the happiness of my daughter, although my separation from her must bring protracted sorrow to me. "When I have offered up this last and greatest sacrifice," thought I, "I shall have at least the consciousness of feeling that I allowed no selfish motive to interfere with what I believed to be best calculated to ensure her welfare, and a day may come when she will understand how well I loved her."

On my way to Mrs. Neville's one day, I encountered Mrs. Scuddamore, escorted by an elderly man with a certain military air, which instantly led me to guess that the individual must be the Major M'Culloch of whom she had spoken. I would willingly have avoided this meeting, for I had an instinctive dread of the well-known frankness and *brusquerie* of the lady, which, always disagreeable to me, would be, under present circumstances, still more so. But I had approached too near her, before discovering our proximity, to permit my crossing the street, or turning back, without subjecting myself to the charge of rudeness. On drawing close, I recognised in her companion a face familiar to me at Malta, which convinced me that he was indeed no other than Major M'Culloch.

"Well met, my dear Mr. Herbert," said Mrs. Scuddamore. "I have been several days endeavoring to find out your address. Give me leave to introduce Major M'Culloch, Mr. Herbert. The Major has also been in search of you; but, as I told him, one of the innumerable disadvantages of not belonging to the military or naval profession, is the difficulty which occurs in finding out gentlemen in London who are not regular residents there, and whose names consequently are not inserted in the 'Court Guide,' whereas at the United Service Clubs soldiers and sailors are soon found. I pity all those who do not belong to the army or navy, but more especially the first service, to which, from being so long attached to one of the finest regiments in the army, I naturally give the preference."

While Mrs. Scuddamore was uttering this speech, Major M'Culloch drew himself up as if on parade, protruding his chest, and holding up his head, while he looked somewhat sternly at me, only making a very formal bow when we were introduced.

"The Major wished particularly to have some conversation with you," resumed Mrs. Scuddamore. "My lodgings are near at hand. I reside in Gilbert street. We may adjourn there, if you have no objection; or, if you prefer it, we can call on you, if you give me your address?"

Unwilling to be exposed to the visits of this very unceremonious lady, I told her that I had a call to make in Brook street, after which I would proceed to her abode; and I hurried off to Mrs. Neville's, where, after staying a much shorter time than usual with my daughter, I walked to Gilbert street, where I found Mrs. Scuddamore, and her friend the Major, waiting my arrival.

"The subject on which I wished to speak to you, Sir," said the latter, "is connected with two men, against whom, if I may credit certain statements in the newspapers, you have commenced

proceedings for a conspiracy to extort money from you. It so happens that these men have robbed me at Malta, and I also have commenced a prosecution against them. A considerable portion of my property has been discovered at their late lodgings, but although I can certify it to be mine, it will not be delivered up to me until after the trial for robbery is over. It occurred to me, Sir, that you could identify these scoundrels as being the same individuals who attempted to break into your house a few nights before they plundered me. A man of the name of Figgins, a person against whom considerable suspicion has been excited, declared, when arrested for having some stolen property found in his lodgings, that these men had been the thieves, and to injure him, against whom they bore great malice, they had brought the plunder there in order to implicate him. Figgins told me that, when beneath your roof, these same persons had proposed to him to join them in robbing your house. Now, this proposal proves that they must have known him to be dishonest, or they would not have made it; and Figgins positively asserted that you, Sir, as well as he, saw them; and that you prevented him from shooting them."

While the old soldier spoke, he eyed me sternly; and I, considerably embarrassed by this new proof of the indiscretion of Figgins, felt the blood mount to my face.

"Figgins misinformed you, Sir," replied I. "I perfectly well remember that an attempt was made to break in through a window in my house at Malta, and that the robbers, alarmed by hearing that we were on the alert, hastily retreated, but I did *not* see them, and consequently could not identify them to be the persons now in prison."

"Did Figgins express his conviction that these men were the individuals who attempted the burglary?" inquired Major M'Culloch.

"If he did," answered I, "the assertion has escaped my recollection."

I saw the Major glance suspiciously at Mrs. Scuddamore, and this increased my embarrassment.

"Come, come, my dear M'Culloch," said she, "let us be open and candid. There is nothing like being so, you may be sure; my good friend Mr. Herbert knows me long and well enough not to take offence at plain speaking; therefore I will not mince matters. The Major, Mr. Herbert, thought it strange that a gentleman of good birth and fortune should have been some time at Malta without ever having been seen at the Governor's table, or elsewhere. This he considered rather suspicious." (I felt my blood boil at the word.)

"I explained to him your extraordinary shyness and reserve when at college, and your not being on habits of acquaintance with a single fellow-collegian, so that it could not be wondered at if the same shyness and reserve prevented your making yourself known to the Governor, and becoming acquainted with the officers of the garrison, as all gentlemen stopping at Malta for *some time do*. Then the assertion of the man *Figgins, who is suspected to be no better than he should be, that you saw the thieves breaking*

into your house, and prevented him from shooting them, struck him as being so extraordinary, that he formed a very erroneous opinion of you which I have left nothing undone to remove."

"The opinion of Major M'Culloch, who is an utter stranger, cannot be of the slightest importance to me, Madam," said I, haughtily. "Nor do I acknowledge his right to question or comment on my actions."

"Now, then, my dear Mr. Herbert, don't allow yourself to be hurried into anger, and to mistake that for offence, which is only the result of my friendly feelings towards you," observed Mrs. Scuddamore.

"Pardon me, Madam," answered I, "but I really cannot comprehend how your friendly feelings towards me can justify this gentleman's suspicions and comments;" and I looked sternly at the Major, who in return drew up his head with an air of offended dignity, and opened his mouth to speak, when the lady laying her hand on his arm, requested him to permit her to speak first.

"When my friend here arrived from Malta," resumed she, "I spoke to him of you, Mr. Herbert, and with those expressions of esteem and regard, which ever since our first acquaintance I have entertained. The high terms I lavished on you drew his attention."

"It is strange," observed the Major, "that a gentleman of the name of Herbert has lately been at Malta, and that a servant who had been in his service, a man said to bear a very bad character, had accused him of having attempted his life; a statement that would have led to a judicial enquiry, had not the surgeon who had been called in by Mr. Herbert declared that the wound on the servant's head had to his certain knowledge been inflicted by Figgins's falling, when in a state of extreme intoxication, and knocked his head against the sharp edge of a table. This surgeon declared that *he* was immediately summoned to Figgins, whom he saw a few minutes after the accident, and that Mr. Herbert had evinced great humanity on the occasion; and previously to his departure from Malta, which took place the following day, had left ample means in his hands to provide for the comfort of, and medical attendance on, Figgins. That he had endeavored to remove the false impression which had taken hold of Figgins, relative to his master's having struck him, but that such was the state of that man's mind, induced by constant habits of intoxication, that he could not be reasoned with. Then followed Figgins's declaration that his master had recognized the robbers who attempted to break into his house at Malta, and had prevented him from firing on them; as also, that although he had recognized them, he had not informed the police of this point."

"All these extraordinary statements produced an unpleasant impression at Malta, and gave rise to various reports to your disadvantage, which I, having learned from my friend here, endeavored to refute; and being perfectly convinced that could we but find you, you would at once explain any circumstance that now appears strange and mysterious, I have been looking out for you everywhere. So long the

wife of a brave and distinguished officer, and, as you have not now I believe to learn, having derived from him those nice and decided sentiments on the point of honor which should be the guide of all, I could not allow your name to be mixed up with aught derogatory to it, without frankly acquainting you of the circumstance, and enabling you to put a stop at once and for ever, to such base falsehoods.

"The opinion of my friend here may not, as you have said, be of any importance to you, Mr. Herbert, but it has great weight with me, for as he will soon become my husband, (indeed we only wait until he is gazetted, as I could not think of wedding any officer of a lower rank in the army than the late ever lamented Colonel Scuddamore), I wish that a gentleman for whom I really feel a sincere regard, should stand as high in the esteem of my future husband, as he does in mine."

"And I, Sir," added the Major, "am well disposed to judge favorably of any gentleman whom Mrs. Scuddamore honors with her friendship; for I know her chivalrous sentiments on the point of honor, and that no partiality could induce her to overlook the slightest deviation from it."

"The simple circumstance of my having commenced proceedings against the men who robbed you, Sir," observed I, "a step which must elicit every circumstance connected with them and Figgins, ought, I should have supposed, to have convinced you, as well as this lady, that I could have nothing to dread from any of the individuals, and should have saved me from being catechised—a process always painful and insulting to the feelings of a gentleman; ladies are, of course, privileged; and Mrs. Scuddamore is peculiarly so in my eyes, from a lively recollection of former kindness, when a raw and inexperienced youth, I stood in need of her good advice and assistance. But permit me to add, that if your confidence in her high sense of honor and judgment is not sufficient to induce you to abstain from forming injurious suspicions of a man she has favored with her esteem, I must prefer not at present entering into disagreeable details, and wait for my justification in your good opinion until the trial of those whom I have indicted for a conspiracy against me shall have effected this point."

And, bowing respectfully to Mrs. Scuddamore, and coldly to Major McCulloch, I left the room, notwithstanding that the lady made a move to prevent my withdrawing. I believe this step on my part was injudicious, but my pride was wounded, and I obeyed its dictates, without reflecting on future consequences.

In due time letters were received from Malta, Naples, and Nice, sending the affidavits of the surgeon, and the testimonials of the few friends I had known in those places, in favor of my character and conduct while in habits of intimacy with them.

Figgins was transferred from the prison at Malta to one in London; and a few days after his arrival, he wrote me a letter, which he induced the turnkey of his prison, by the promise of a large reward from me, to have put in the post-office. The turnkey delivered the letter to

the jailor, and he, deeming it expedient, as a chance of leading to the truth, opened it, in the presence of witnesses, and then, carefully taking a copy, resealed and forwarded the epistle to me. Its contents were as follows:

"Sir,—As I now believe you had no intention of making away with me at Malta, and find that those rascals Motcombe and Bradstock, have played me false all along, I wish to make amends for whatever harm I may have done you, and also to get those scoundrels punished for perjury and conspiracy. If you will pledge yourself to give me five hundred pounds more, I will swear before any court of law they bring me to, that the whole story they have said I have let out is a lie. I will swear you were never in my power in any way; that I never suspected you of murdering your sister-in-law: that I never discovered her body where you concealed it; in short, that the whole story is a hum got up by these rascals to get money from you. You may depend on me *this* time; for I really wish to serve you, and to punish those who tried to ruin me, by bringing their stolen goods to my lodging when I was too ill to see what they were about, and then writing to the police to tell 'em where to find the plunder. One line from your hand to say 'Yes,' is all I require.

"J. FIGGINS."

I trembled with mingled emotions of indignation, shame, and fear, as I perused this letter; but the first feeling prevailing over the others, and thoughtless of results, I seized my pen and wrote to Figgins that I was surprised at his daring to address me; and to state that if he wrote any more letters, I would not receive them. This answer, as was afterwards proved, had been opened by the gaoler, and tended greatly to remove the suspicions entertained against me, occasioned by the numerous falsehoods circulated by those ever on the alert to prejudice and condemn all who are accused.

## CHAPTER LIX.

It had been deemed expedient by my legal adviser that proceedings should also be commenced against Figgins for a conspiracy, the first menaces to extort money from me having originated with him. This step was, I felt, fraught with danger to me. What might not be drawn out to my disadvantage from an examination of this man? For although he could bring no evidence that could really criminate me before a jury, enough might transpire to throw a deep and indelible shade of suspicion on my character. I dared not oppose the advice of my counsel and lawyer, for I felt that such a measure would greatly prejudice me in their opinion, so I remained a silent observer of a line of conduct on their part, the result of which I could not help foreseeing must, with my sensitive feelings, prove fatal to my happiness.

Figgins angered to the utmost degree by my

stern refusal to accede to his scheme, had now become as vindictive, if not more so, than Motcombe and Bradstock. He vowed that he would be revenged, and bring to light the crime which, as he alleged, his conscience had often reproached him for having so long concealed.

An early day was named for the trial, and never did a criminal, conscious of guilt, experience a greater degree of trepidation and terror than did I, who had no actual crime of which to accuse myself. Distracted and restless, I was more than half tempted to fly from England for ever, and forfeit at once my reputation and honor; but then would come the reflection, that such a step would put the seal on any suspicions that might be awakened on the trial, and therefore I chose the lesser evil, and remained.

I had frequently recourse to opiates to deaden the agony of my mind during this time, but, alas! they failed to relieve me; for, during the stupor they induced I was haunted by incoherent, but fearful, dreams, as torturing as my waking thoughts; and I really believe that, had this state of mind continued some time longer, insanity or death must have soon ensued. I had not the consolation experienced by those who start from a fearful dream, to bless God that it was only a dream, and then again sink into slumber.

Oh! no. When I awoke, and recalled my scattered senses to consciousness, I shuddered at the thought that the reality of my position was as agonizing as the troublous visions whence I had started! Then I would remember every incident of my life, and as I traced effect to cause, I would imagine that I saw the hand of Omnipotence in all, even to my having brought down on myself the terrible ordeal which I alone could have invoked.

Never shall I forget my feelings when Mr. Goldey told me it was positively necessary that I should attend the trial, and appear in the witness box the following day. My utter ignorance of all judicial proceedings had left me unprepared for this necessity, and not the utmost exertion of my self-control could prevent my exposing the dismay and horror with which the contemplation of such a measure inspired me. I staggered to a chair, and gasping for breath, inquired if there were no means of escaping this great annoyance?

"None whatever," replied Mr. Goldey. "But you are pale as death, Mr. Herbert," observed he. "One might suppose that it was *you* who were to be tried, and not those scoundrels whom you are prosecuting! Your nerves are, indeed, in a very fearful state, and when this trial is over, I should strongly advise you to consult a skillful physician, in order that some treatment may be had recourse to, to remove their irritability. I have, it is true, in the course of my practice seen instances of prosecutors and witnesses more nervous than the guilty. We all know how the poet Cowper suffered when called as a witness; but you, my dear Sir, are really so excited, that I can no longer wonder that these rascals, having, by some means, discovered your extraordinary nervous susceptibility, have availed themselves of the knowledge to endeavor to extort money from you."

At another time, and under different circum-

stances, I should have felt wounded and offended at the freedom of my lawyer's remarks; but now, having the sense to perceive that the unusual extent of this nervousness furnished the sole explanation or excuse that could be offered for my having yielded to the menaces of Figgins, far from resenting the comments of Mr. Goldey on the subject, I confessed that my nerves were so shattered ever since the deaths of those dear to me, that I had no control over them, and was alarmed even about the most puerile things.

"All this comes from an idle life, Mr. Herbert," said my lawyer. "A man without a profession or occupation, which keeps his mind from self, is ever prone to become nervous, or in other words, a hypochondriac, indulging the strangest fancies, and unfit for the world and the complicated trials it imposes. Business takes a man from morbid thoughts; it makes him think less of self, and more of others, and this of itself is a great blessing; for, depend on it, Mr. Herbert, that if we expand on self only, the interest and thoughts that should extend to our fellow-beings, we destroy our own happiness, for *self* is the worst object on which a man can allow his mind to be wholly engrossed."

The eventful morning of the trial arrived. Oh! how I trembled at its advent. Mr. Goldey came for me, and noticing my pallor and trepidation, advised me to take a glass of wine and a biscuit. I had not thought of this expedient to support my drooping spirits; but I acquiesced in his proposal, and having swallowed the wine, I entered a carriage with him, and was driven to the court, where the counsel retained for me were already in attendance. I seemed in a dream, a vague sense of terror filled my breast; and yet the wine I had drank, by stimulating my nerves, and quickening the circulation of my blood, lent me a sort of desperate courage, that enabled me to conceal my alarm. "Those scoundrels," I overheard Mr. Sergeant Vernon say to Mr. Goldey, *sotto voce*, "have got Messrs. Burton and Vyner on their side. I wish they had any other counsel, for as our client is so nervous a man, and these gentlemen are apt to use, if not abuse, the latitude allowed to our profession, they may inflict pain on him. The lawyer is a sad scamp, so great a disgrace to his profession, that I heartily wish he was struck off the roll. He may truly be called the rogue's friend, for all his clients are among that class, which can find no other."

"Very true," replied Mr. Goldey; "but that fact is so well known to the bar, that his clients suffer by it."

How quickly beat my heart as I heard this conversation, and how did I summon up my courage to appear calm and collected! And now the case was called, Herbert *versus* Motcombe and Bradstock, by the crier, and I was placed in the witness-box. The court was densely crowded, and every eye was fixed on me. It seemed to my excited mind, as if from every one of those multitudinous eyes, there issued a beam, aimed expressly at me, which entered my brow, and seared my brain; yet I allowed not my eyelids to droop, to shield me from these burning beams shot at me; but, wound up to a desperate pitch of courage, preserved a calm demeanor.

Motcombe, Bradstock, and Figgins, were in the dock, and my heart quailed within me, as I met their demoniacal glances, so expressive of intense hatred and vengeance. The case was opened by my counsel, and while he stated every particular of it, my eye wandered through the court. Seated by the judge on the bench, I recognised, with a painful emotion, the noble lord whom I had formerly met at Naples, and who, because he had not previously known me, had so charitably concluded I was not worthy of so great an honor. His glance was at once stern and triumphant. It seemed to say, that the man who was not of his acquaintance, might be capable of any evil. Major McCulloch was not far distant, and alternately looked from me to the dock, with a severe countenance. As Mr. Sergeant Vernon proceeded in a luminous and eloquent speech to state the case, a solemn silence was maintained in the court. A considerable impression seemed to have been produced by his discourse. Many a face was turned to mine, with a mingled expression of curiosity and interest; and as my eyes glanced over them, my courage seemed to revive at these symptoms of sympathy.

"My client," said Mr. Vernon, "must not be judged severely, if, when reduced to a state of illness and nervousness, occasioned by severe domestic afflictions, and far from his native land, with no friend near to counsel or support him, he was wanting in the energy, which, under other circumstances, would have enabled him to repel the attempt to extort money from him, with the same firmness with which he has withstood it in England. Those acquainted with mankind, and who know how powerfully affliction operates on the nervous system, will comprehend the temporary weakness that led him to fall the prey to the machinations of a designing villain, and will not allow themselves to imagine the least possibility of crime to have ever existed, where only the results of depression of spirits, and broken health, can be found."

The letter from Motcombe and Bradstock, naming the sum, and the conditions for which they would bind themselves to molest me no more, was here produced. I was sworn, and proved I had received it, and believed it to come from them, as also the particulars of the interview with them, and their menaces. I was then subjected to the cross-examination of the counsel for the defendants, and he put many subtle questions to me, all calculated to excite the prejudices and suspicions of the jury against me.

"Why," inquired Mr. Burton, "did you not at once, and indignantly, refuse compliance with the demands of another person, who had previously compelled you to pay him large sums? Remember, Sir, you are on your oath."

"My client," observed Mr. Vernon, "is not bound to answer that question at present. My brother Burton forgets that the evidence against his clients, having proved the conspiracy, he has nothing to do with any other case."

"My clients have already declared," resumed Mr. Burton, "and are now willing to be sworn, that Figgins had informed them that Mr. Herbert had, at different times, given him large sums of money, to induce the said Figgins to

conceal his knowledge of a murder committed by Mr. Herbert, of which payments, evidence can be furnished."

A murmur ran through the court, and again every eye was turned on me, while I, ready to drop to the ground, and wishing, in the sharp agony that wrung my heart, that it might open to hide me, was obliged to support my trembling frame against the bars of the box.

And now Mr. Burton stated the case for the defendants; and most artfully was it constructed, omitting nothing that could serve his clients or inculpate me. The statement was listened to with breathless attention; and, as it proceeded, I could perceive that it produced a strong impression against me. When concluded, Figgins was the only evidence called to substantiate the charge. His appearance was even worse than I had anticipated—his face bearing all the disgusting marks of intemperance; his countenance expressive of hardened impudence, and his dress, the remains of his former vulgar finery, completed as revolting a picture of a man of habitual low habits and vices, as could be seen.

Being sworn, Mr. Burton demanded—"Did you inform Messrs. Motcombe and Bradstock that Mr. Herbert had given you large sums of money to conceal his having committed murder?"

"Never!" was the concise reply.

"Remember, you are on your oath!"

"So I do."

"By the virtue of your oath, you never made any such disclosure to them?"

"Not I.—I wouldn't be such a fool as to tell a secret for nothing to them, when I could get as much money as I pleased from Mr. Herbert for keeping it."

A suppressed murmur in the court was again audible.

"Recollect yourself!" said Mr. Burton. "How should my clients know your secret, if you had not revealed it to them? I don't think it likely that Mr. Herbert" (and here the speaker looked cunningly at me) "would have told it to them."

"No, I don't think he would," replied Figgins, his swollen lips distended into a grin, "for Mr. Herbert wasn't given to talking about it!" and he looked impudently at me while he spoke.

"Then you persist in swearing that you never told your friends how you obtained so much money?"

"Never!"

"Your memory, I am afraid, is not very good. Recollect, you often drank with my clients: and the old saying has it, 'that when the wine is in the wit is out.'—You may, when you had drunk more than usual, have placed this confidence in your companions."

"Not I—I knew them too well for that;—I wasn't going to give a cow, which gave me such good milk, to them who would soon leave not a drop for me."



## CHAPTER LX.

No cross-examination could extort from Figgins an admission that he had ever told Motcombe or Bradstock what they had sworn he had revealed to them, although every reply he made to the queries of their counsel implicated me as deeply as he could.

The evidence called for the defendants being now closed, and their statements wholly disproved, the judge summed up; and the jury brought in a verdict against them for conspiracy to extort money, and for gross perjury: and the judge, having pronounced sentence of three years' imprisonment and hard labor, they were removed from the dock; while I received the congratulations of my counsel and of Mr. Goldey.

And now the case against Figgins was called; and my counsel stated it at length, calling evidence to prove Figgins's having pursued me from place to place, to extort money. The counsel for the defendant then cross-examined the witnesses; and the result was, that my servant, who was one of them, admitted facts but too well calculated to excite the strongest suspicions and prejudices against me.

"In what capacity did Figgins first enter the service of Mr. Herbert?" demanded Mr. Burton.

"He was engaged to sit up at night with my master, when he was ill with a brain fever," was the reply.

"How long did he remain?"

"I believe about ten days, or thereabouts."

"When he was discharged, did he remain at Nice?"

"No; he left Nice, and was absent some weeks."

"Did you know where he went?"

"I heard from the nurse-maid that he went to Wales."

"When did he return?"

"The evening before my master left Nice."

"What was the impression made on your mind relative to Figgins, while he attended on your master?"

"I formed a bad opinion of him, from observing that he was addicted to drinking, and was of a prying, inquisitive turn."

"Why did you think him prying and inquisitive?"

"Because I often overheard him asking the nurse-maid questions about my master and his family."

"What were those questions?"

"He inquired whether any young lady had been missed, or had ever fallen down, or been thrown down a precipice in my master's neighborhood? and whether any one had been accused or suspected of the murder?"

"What did you think, when you overheard these questions?"

"I thought he was half crazy, or tipsy."

"When did you see him again?"

"The evening before we left Nice."

"Where did you see him?"

"He brought a letter to my master's lodgings."

"Who for?"

"For my master."

"Was an answer sent to that letter?"

"I heard there was; but I did not deliver it."

"Where did your master next proceed?"

"To Turin."

"Did he lead the persons at Nice to believe that he was going to remain at Turin?"

"I understood he was going back to England."

"Where did he go to from Turin?"

"To Naples."

"Did he make some stay there?"

"Yes; some weeks."

"Where did he then proceed?"

"To Palermo."

"Did Figgins come to Palermo?"

"He came to Palermo some short time after. I saw him one evening in the street, and he appeared to be the worse for liquor."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No; I avoided him, for I had a bad opinion of him."

"Did it not strike you as strange that Figgins came to Palermo?"

"I did think it odd; but as he had no settled place of abode, I thought he might be going from one place to another, to look for a situation."

"How long did your master remain at Palermo, after you saw Figgins there?"

"Not long."

"Where did your master proceed to, when he left Palermo?"

"To Naples."

"Where did he then go?"

"He took an excursion of some days into the country, to see some antiquities?"

"You did not hear where?"

"No."

"When your master returned from this solitary excursion, where did he go next?"

"We all went to Capua, as we believed, on our road to Rome."

"Did your master say he was going to Rome?"

"I don't recollect whether he told me so; but I know I understood it to be so."

"How long did you remain at Capua?"

"Only a few hours."

"And where did you then go?"

"We returned to Naples."

"What—on the same day?"

"Yes; the evening of the same day."

"Did you go back to the same hotel?"

"No."

"Where did you go?"

"To another hotel at Naples, whence we proceeded to Sorrento."

"Did your master take all his luggage with him to Capua,—and did the owners and persons at the hotel think he was going on to Rome?"

"Yes; they all thought so."

"Did you not think it very odd that your master should try to mislead people into a belief that he was going to Rome, and then only go as far as Capua?"

"I did think it strange."

"How long were you at Sorrento before Figgins came there?"

"Not long."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes; I saw him there."

"Did anything particular strike you, connected with his presence at Sorento?"

"Yea, I remember that during the time he was there, a person came one day to the house, to say that my master was taken very unwell at a certain spot near the town, where he was often in the habit of going, and wanted me. I went, and found my master looking very ill, and seemingly agitated. He leant on my arm, and walked slowly home, being very weak, and as we passed through Sorento to the house, I saw Figgins walking with Motcombe and Bradstock, and I was surprised that he did not take off his hat, or even touch it, to my master."

A murmur through the Court was now heard, and I felt that all eyes were on me.

"What happened next?"

"The following day my master went to Naples, and from thence I got orders to bring Miss Herbert, her nurse, and all the effects of my master to Naples, where we were to arrive late on the following evening, and to drive *direct* to the Mola, where my master was to meet us. We were not to go near the hotel."

"What next occurred?"

"We did as we were ordered, met my master on the Mola, and by his directions we embarked in the packet, which in half-an-hour after set sail for Malta."

"Did you suspect that there was any mystery, or attempt at concealing his changes of residence, on the part of your master?"

"I did think there was a desire that our embarking for Malta should not be known."

"Were you long at Malta before Figgins made his appearance there?"

"No; only a short time."

"Did you not think it very strange that Figgins should follow your master to every place?"

"I did think it odd."

"Did Figgins come to Malta alone?"

"I don't know, but I saw him walking with Motcombe and Bradstock at Malta."

"Did he come to your master's house?"

"Yes, and my master engaged him as a servant."

"In what capacity?"

"My master never told me. He only said that Figgins should not have any power over me."

"Did your master want an additional servant when he engaged Figgins?"

"I did not think he did."

"Figgins, then, was an extra servant?"

"Yes."

"Did your master know that Figgins was a man of intemperate habits?"

"I believe he did."

"Had you ever suspected that your master disliked Figgins?"

"Yes; I had seen, when he was dismissed at Nice, that my master disliked him."

"Yet after this, and knowing him to be a drunkard, he took him into the house, although he did not require an additional servant?"

"Yes."

"Did you not think this a very strange proceeding?"

"I did consider it rather extraordinary."

"Having, as you have acknowledged, a

strong personal dislike to Figgins, did you make any observation to your master, when he re-engaged him, or did you wish to leave his service?"

"I certainly did make some representations on the subject, and I did wish to leave."

"What was the conduct of Figgins while in your master's service at Malta?"

"It was very irregular."

"Did he indulge in habits of intoxication?"

"Yes; he was generally in liquor, and smoked—a thing never before permitted in the house."

"When remonstrated with on this latter point, did he leave it off?"

"No, he became very abusive."

"What were his occupations?"

"He really did nothing."

"Did he appear to entertain the respect and submission generally shown by servants to their employers?"

"No; he did not."

"Did you not suspect that there must be something very wrong, when an extra servant is hired, and not only does no work, but drinks, and smokes, against the regulations of the house?"

"I confess I thought there was something very incomprehensible in it; but my master had been always so worthy a gentleman, such an excellent husband and father, and so kind to his servants, that I could not bring myself to think that he could be to blame, and therefore I imagined that his sorrow for the loss of my poor mistress had so disturbed his mind, that he was no longer the same as formerly, and did not keep the same regularity and strictness as before."

"Do you remember an alarm having been given that some robbers were endeavoring to break into the house at Malta, one night?"

"I do."

"Who first gave the alarm on that occasion?"

"My master."

"Did Figgins wish to have the robbers fired on?"

"Yes."

"Who prevented this being done?"

"My master."

"Did Figgins seem to know who the robbers were?"

"He did, and from what he let out at the time I guessed he meant Motcombe and Bradstock."

"Did your master take any steps to discover the robbers?"

"Yes, he did, for he sent me to the police office to report it."

"What occurred after?"

"Figgins got very much intoxicated the following days, and smoked; the smell of the tobacco infected the house, and when I remonstrated with him he became violent and insolent, and even intruded himself into my master's presence in a very disrespectful manner; and in attempting to strike me, he lost his balance, fell down, and hit his head violently against the leg of the table."

"What did your master do on that occasion?"

"He showed the utmost humanity. Staunched the wound, which bled profusely, and sent off immediately for a surgeon."

"Did not Figgins accuse your master of in-

flicting the wound, and with the intention of killing him?"

"Yes; he did."

"Can you swear that your master did not strike him, or push him down?"

"Yes; I can positively swear he did neither."

"What do you suppose was the motive that led your master to leave Malta so soon after the accident that occurred to Figgins?"

"I really don't know, but I concluded he wished to return to England."

"Did it not occur to you that he wished to leave Malta while Figgins was unable to follow him?"

"I believe some such thought did come into my head."

"Did you think that your master was afraid of Figgins?"

"I thought he was very shy of him."

Here closed the cross-examination of my servant, and the case of Figgins was stated by his counsel. It openly accused me of murder. Stated that his suspicions being excited by hearing me continually raving in my sleep of having thrown a lady over a precipice, and having buried the body in a cavern, he had determined on finding the body and bringing me to justice. That he had gone to Llandover, in Wales, had made enquiries, had found that a young lady, my sister-in-law, had been supposed to have fallen over a cliff, and he had dug in several parts of a cavern in the neighborhood, had discovered the body of a female, which he had removed to another place, in order that should I wish to have this proof of my crime put aside, I should not know where to find it.

A murmur prevailed in the court, and all eyes were turned again on me. The statement detailed the sums of money Figgins had received from me by menacing to reveal my guilt. The evidence that could be furnished by the banker at Nice, who had paid the amount of my cheque for 500*l.* to Figgins, as the evidence of the 200*l.* in money paid by me into his hands at Palermo, corresponding precisely with that sum drawn by me from my banker at Palermo. The statement of these facts produced a great sensation in Court, and I felt like a convict awaiting sentence of death. Oh, the agony of that hour! Never, never can it be effaced from my memory!

The statement went on to tell how Figgins having renewed acquaintance with Motcombe and Bradstock, and having lavished large sums in feasting them, they formed suspicions that he had some means of obtaining money, which they were bent on discovering. How they made him tipsy repeatedly, to discover his secret. How he, fearful of betraying it, fled from them; how they pursued him from place to place, until he, alarmed for his personal safety, and also, lest when intoxicated he might betray the truth, had sought a private interview with me at Malta, and had insisted on my taking him beneath my roof for protection against the machinations of these men, in whose power he was to a certain degree, by their knowledge of some former offence which he had committed. How these men followed him to my house. How he had refused to see them, and how they had uttered menaces against him. How they had proposed to him to let

them enter my house at night to rob me. In short, not a single detail connected with the whole affair was omitted; and although my counsel tried, by a rigorous cross-examination, to impair the testimony of Figgins, they could not succeed.

During the statement of the circumstances which I had so foolishly, so madly, concealed from my legal advisers, I felt the blood recede from my heart to my brain so violently, that I expected nothing less than that a stroke of apoplexy would fell me to the ground, and put an end to my shame and torture. I saw although I dared hardly to meet their eyes, the looks of astonishment and anger that were exchanged between my counsel and Mr. Goldey. I saw that their confidence in my innocence was destroyed, that I was in their opinion, a lost—a degraded wretch. The judge summed up the evidence, and the jury having withdrawn for a considerable time, returned and pronounced a verdict against Figgins for a conspiracy to extort money from me; but expressed their unanimous opinion, that so serious a charge as murder having been sworn against me, and the evidence of Figgins not having been refuted, they thought that I should be committed to prison, until, on a formal trial, I could be able to disprove the charge made against me. This opinion seemed to be that of the whole Court also, for a murmur of approbation was audible, until the Court was called to order by the judge. Sentence of imprisonment for two years was pronounced on Figgins, who was removed from the dock, while I was given in charge to be conveyed to a prison once more, there to await the result of a trial, the crime of which I was accused not being a bailable one. Mr. Goldey approached me, his eyes flashing with anger.

"Why, in the name of common sense," exclaimed he, "did you conceal the facts that came out on the trial of Figgins from me and from your counsel? You have destroyed your character for ever, for even an acquittal after the trial, now become inevitable, could not remove the obloquy which the uncontroverted evidence of to-day has cast on your reputation."

"I wish to speak to my counsel to-morrow," replied I, "and although I cannot, Mr. Goldey, exculpate myself from the madness of not revealing all you this day heard, be assured that I am not only innocent, but that no proof of crime can be brought forward against me."

He shook his head incredulously, seemed doubtful whether he would continue to act for me; but yielded, when I requested him not now to desert me, and to let me see my counsel early the following day.

My feelings on again entering the prison may be more easily imagined than described, I was a crushed—a ruined man! The burning brand of shame seemed to sear my brow, and my heart was pierced with anguish. For how many days, weeks, nay months, might I not pine in this hateful prison, before a trial liberated me from it? And during this period to bear the stigma of guilt, to be prejudged by hundreds—thousands; oh! it was agony! And my child, my pure, my beautiful child! how bitter was the pang with which every recollection of her

was fraught! How long might it not be before I should again behold her? and when that blessing might be accorded me, how could I bear to meet the glance of her, on whose name I had drawn down disgrace and dishonor. How could I meet Mrs. Neville, knowing that although a trial might acquit me of murder, it could not destroy the damnable evidence of Figgins, which proved me to have bought his silence with hundreds of pounds, and to have received a ruffian of the lowest, basest habits, beneath the same roof with my daughter—Nothing but conscious guilt, or insanity, could be received as an explanation of these proofs of criminality, and I writhed in an agony of mind, compared with which, all physical torture is light, as my reason pointed out the extent of my disgrace and its consequences.

## CHAPTER LXI.

THAT was indeed a fearful, a terrible night! I trembled for my reason, and prayed that, if I must lose it, it might not be destroyed until I had seen my counsel, and enabled him to comprehend the peculiarity of my unhappy character, which had led step by step to my present misery and disgrace.

Mr. Sergeant Vernon came to me early the following day, accompanied by Mr. Goldey. I had been so struck by the intellectual physiognomy of this gentleman, as well as by the benevolent expression of his countenance, that I felt I could reveal to him that which I could not bring myself previously to disclose to Mr. Goldey. Not wishing, however, to offend the latter, I did not object to his being present while I unbosomed myself to Mr. Sergeant Vernon; nay, I proclaimed my own blameable disingenuousness with Mr. Goldey, entreated his pardon for it, and then confessed that, finding he did not, or could not comprehend my wayward temper, habitual reserve, and nervousness, which had occasioned all the wretchedness in which I now found myself plunged, I had not moral courage enough to confide to him the circumstances brought forward the previous day by Figgins on the trial, lest he should believe me culpable.

"Why; this is downright madness," exclaimed Mr. Goldey.

"There is more madness in all men," observed Mr. Vernon, mildly, "than people imagine. Who can say that, on some subjects, all men may not be more or less mad. Do not let us interrupt Mr. Herbert, whose peculiar nature and character I must examine, as an anatomist does the subject which he dissects, in order to discover the malady that destroyed life. Keep nothing from me, Mr. Herbert. Remember that you are confiding your errors to a man who has so long and so profoundly studied mankind, that he has learned to pity and sympathise with their misfortunes, while tracing effect back to cause."

Encouraged by his mildness, I opened my whole soul to Mr. Vernon, and left not a single secret in it unrevealed save the one on which

every trial, every misery, had been based—namely, my having involuntarily occasioned the death of my wife's sister, and having concealed the body.

He listened with breathless interest to the narration; comprehended how the weakness and nervousness, induced by intense grief and long illness, had led to my falling an easy prey to the machinations of Figgins; how, having once yielded to his menaces, a dread of exposure of that fact precluded my seeking redress for a conspiracy, although perfectly conscious of my own freedom from guilt.

How great was the contrast offered between Mr. Vernon and Mr. Goldey on this occasion! The first understood every minutiae, every shade of my nervous and sensitive nature; the second could only view me as a maniac. I told Mr. Vernon of my anxiety to have the trial brought forward as soon as possible; furnished instructions to have the good clergyman and doctor of Llandovery brought as witnesses, as also my housekeeper, and the nurse of my wife's sister.

Fortunately for me, the courts of law were still sitting, and in a fortnight the trial came on. Often during that period did Mr. Vernon visit me, and, by his sympathy and kindness, alleviate the gloom of my prison. He possessed great influence over Mr. Goldey, and used it to remove from his mind the evil impression produced by the evidence of Figgins.

"I see nothing to be made of his confession," said Mr. Goldey, "except to account for his yielding to the scoundrel Figgins's extortion through insanity."

"Leave all the defence to me," would Mr. Sergeant Vernon reply; "and you will find what can be made by the exposure of a morbid pride and an over excited sensibility, when worked upon by a not unskillful hand."

Figgins was sent down to Llandovery, in the custody of four police-men, who were to be present while the cavern and adjoining ground were to be opened in search of the body he had asserted that he had removed.

After a laborious and strict search, not a trace of any such evidence could be found; and when upbraided by his guard for the useless expense and trouble he had caused, he acknowledged that he *never* had found a body, and only pretended to have made such a discovery in order to alarm me, and that he might obtain the money he intended to extort from me.

This confession, made before the four police-men, had a great effect on public opinion. The day of trial came, and I appeared as a prisoner in the dock.

The counsel for the prosecution stated the case, but could bring no evidence to support the charge, except Figgins, who acknowledged before the Court, that he never had found the body, and only suspected the murder from hearing my ravings when in a brain-fever.

How differently sounded in my ears the murmur that was heard through the Court on this admission, to those which had so terribly wounded them on the former trial! Now, pity and sympathy were expressed in that murmur, and every eye turned towards me, beaming with

compassion. The witnesses from Llandover proved the mysterious death of my wife's sister, as also that I had never seen her. The death of my mother, my grief, and the severe illness, which was the result, were stated. My house-keeper proved, that from the hour I arrived at Llandover I had not left the house, except to attend the funeral, and that when that sad ceremony was over, I returned home direct, and shut myself up in my room, absorbed in grief. She swore (good, worthy creature! how little did she think she was swearing that which was untrue), that I could not leave my chamber without her being aware of it. That I was ill in bed when Mrs. Maitland's servant knocked at the door to state that one of his young mistresses was missing. That she entered my room to inform me of the circumstance, and that I, although very ill, had left my bed, to join the servant in search of the young lady, and had passed the night in exploring every spot which it was deemed likely she might have visited. She bore evidence to the dangerous brain-fever that resulted from the fatigue, cold, and anxiety of that night. She related how, in the fever, I kept raving that the young lady had fallen, or had been thrown down from a precipice, the general belief in the neighborhood being that she had slipped from a narrow pathway, her favorite walk, over the cliff. She stated how Mrs. Maitland, the mother of the lost young lady, had nursed me through this brain-fever, and had become fondly attached to me from the interest I had taken in her misfortune. The whole circumstances of my recovery, my attachment to Mrs. Maitland's second daughter, my marriage, the discovery of the body of the long-missing young lady on the very day of my nuptials, were narrated. My going off with the nurse, who was to identify the body, my humanity and tenderness on the occasion;—the interment of the body in my own family vault, my care and affection to my mother-in-law, and passionate love to my wife;—the deep gratitude of my mother-in-law to me up to the last moment of her life; were recapitulated, and excited a great interest in the Court.

The old nurse was then called. She proved the identifying of the body (forgetting, poor old creature, in the weakness of memory, brought on by age, that she had fainted when brought to the coffin, to look on the dead), and even spoke of the beauty still to be traced in the face,—that terrible face, which I could not think of without shuddering!

The clergyman spoke of my high reputation in my neighborhood,—of my charity, and unimpeachable moral character; as also of his having attended the funeral of Miss Maitland.

The doctor gave his testimony in my favor, and so satisfactory was all the evidence, that nothing now remained, but to destroy the effect produced by the only facts proved by Figgins, namely, my having given him large sums to conceal the charge he made against me—of having murdered my wife's sister. Why, if innocent, as was now proved, by so many witnesses of good character, had I yielded to his menaces? This query was addressed to the Court, by the counsel of Figgins. Mr. Sergeant Ver-

non replied to it in a speech, in which he so luminously and eloquently detailed the effect of violent grief and sickness on the nervous system, giving many illustrations to exemplify his statements, that not a single person in the Court refused credence to his admirable hypothesis. He called medical men, of high professional reputation, to prove, how often men of nervous temperaments, but of strict honor and probity, who were utterly incapable of a crime, had yielded, under the excitement of a dread of censure, to the menaces of a villain, and given vast sums to prevent an unfounded accusation being made against them.

He traced my history from boyhood. My extreme sensitiveness amounting, in many instances, to a positive morbidness. The horror of exposing my name, and of drawing a painful notoriety on that of an only and adored child, blinding me, at the moment, to the danger and evil consequences likely to result from my reprehensible weakness in buying the silence of a man from whose worst malice, I ought to have well known, I had, in reality, nothing to dread. Never was the idiosyncrasy of a nervous hypochondriac so well laid open and defined as by Mr. Sergeant Vernon; and the countenances of his hearers revealed the compassion he had created in their breasts for me.

How powerfully did he describe the various emotions and conflicts of my agonized mind, during so long a period; and with what tact did he bring forward the testimonies in my favor, not only from my neighbors in Wales, but from the two intellectual and well-known *savants*, with whom I had been on the most friendly terms in Italy, all vouching for the irreproachability of my moral conduct while known to them, and to their perfect confidence in my worth.

The jury brought in a verdict of Not guilty; and the judge, in a discourse remarkable for good feeling and knowledge of the human heart, pronounced my acquittal, regretting the annoyance to which I had been exposed, through the machinations and perjury of a vile fellow, who, basing his scheme of extortion on the incoherent ravings of delirium, which he had listened to when I was in a brain-fever, and judging of mankind by his knowledge of one bad specimen of it—self, had, for so long a period, rendered me his prey, until, finding that I would no longer continue to be so, he had tried to avenge his disappointed cupidity, by boldly charging me with a terrible crime, of which he had wholly failed in establishing a single proof.

Many individuals of the highest respectability had come forward after the trial to congratulate me, and express their satisfaction at its result; but such was the shock inflicted on my nervous system, that even their sympathy gave me pain. I felt persuaded that I must henceforth be regarded as little less than insane, and that to be pointed at by the finger of pity was almost as humiliating as if that of scorn were directed to me. I determined to leave my native land for some distant one, where, unknown, I could wear away the remainder of my life, leaving my child with the admirable protectress I had found for her.

I regulated all my affairs, amply rewarded Mr. Vernon, whose luminous exposition of my unhappy state of nerves had exonerated me from the fearful dilemma in which my folly—my madness—had placed me, and then prepared to depart.

"Never again," said Mr. Goldey, "will I believe a man culpable, however appearances may be against him, until a trial has decided his case. I acknowledge, Mr. Herbert, that had you revealed the whole case to me, I could not have believed that a man, conscious of his own innocence, could become the prey of a scoundrel like Figgins. Mr. Sergeant Vernon has proved to me how much the actions of a man may be influenced by the state of his nerves, a fact I never before even imagined, and henceforth I will not forget the lesson."

I dared not trust myself to take leave of my daughter, lest I should find myself unable to part from her; and my reason told me that I best consulted her happiness in letting her remain with Mrs. Neville. Our farewell would, I felt, be a trial I had not courage to support, and the sight of my agony might leave an impression on her ductile mind injurious to her future peace.

I wrote a long letter to Mrs. Neville explanatory of my feelings; entreated that a portrait of my daughter should be sent me every year, that I might mark the changes from childhood to womanhood, which I was not to have the bliss of witnessing; and having sent that excellent

woman and her daughter costly gifts, as poor proofs of my gratitude, I left England, and directing my course to Sorrento, engaged the house in which I had resided when previously there. I preferred it, because in it I could picture my child in the rooms she had inhabited, and I could gaze on the little bed she had slept in. I found the good Padre Muroli at Sorrento, as usual, constantly employed in works of piety and charity, in which I have endeavored to aid him; and am often gratified by the visits of my worthy friend the Chevalier Bertucci; and, passing most of my evenings in the society of the good Padre, years have rolled on, Time bringing healing on his wings, as he draws me further from the days of my heavy trials, and nearer to that which will reunite me to my beloved and never-forgotten Louisa.

At the close of each day I murmur to myself, "A day nearer;" and this thought is as sweet to me, as the sight of the bed where he is to repose is to the weary traveller at the end of a long and most fatiguing journey. The narrating the events of my troubled life has filled up many an hour of my self-imposed solitude; and I have been soothed by the thought, that when I am no longer a denizen of earth, my daughter will know why I left my native land, and made the sacrifice of consigning the charge of her youth to one with whom I believed her happiness would be more secure than with her father.

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